

What the Gray House Hid

CHAPTER I

—1—

"There's a lady asking for you, Mr. Hanby. She says she won't go away until she sees you."

Hanby looked at Smucker, and sighed. The secretary—he had chosen this designation himself—was a small thin man with an active Adam's apple, who despised tact as something beneath him. Hanby had often set out for his offices in Leonard street with the intention of letting Smucker go, and of replacing him with a neat, smiling, efficient girl; but invariably some sixth sense informed Smucker of his danger. Invariably he would speak of his vast responsibilities, of his large family, of his invalid father, of the house he was buying on the installment plan, and of the ravages of insects in his little garden.

A neat, smiling, and efficient girl would have known that her employer was busy, and would have found out what the visitor's errand was.

"What does she want?" inquired Hanby.

Smucker assumed his superior air.

"She wouldn't say. Otherwise I should have informed you, Mr. Hanby."

"What do you think she wanted?"

"I suspect she is desirous of selling you a dog."

Hanby brightened.

"That's easy. Explain in well-chosen language that in another incarnation I was a priest of Bubastis. I cannot, therefore, as a one-time worshiper of the Sacred Cat, buy dogs from strange ladies."

Adolf Smucker sighed. His employer's frivolity always saddened him. He would have preferred to serve a sterner, more unbending, portlier, and older man, a man who never made jokes or saw them. Smucker often wondered why it was Hilton Hanby had succeeded so well. A swift glance showed Smucker that his employer was looking at the photographs of the splendid estate he was about to buy.

Mr. Smucker passed to the outer office with slow step. The lady who would not go was the sort of person whom he always surveyed with hostile eyes. She wore too much jewelry and was enwrapped lavishly in fur.

"If," said he coldly, "you wish to sell one or more of your dogs, Mr. Hanby says for me to say he's not in the market."

The stranger pressed her three tiny beasts so closely to her that they yelped.

"Not all his money could buy even one of them!" she snapped. "I must see him. Tell him I shall stay here all day until he comes through that door."

"Madam, I suggest telephoning from a pay station."

"My darlings will not enter a telephone booth, and I dare not trust them to anyone else. Tell him I do not want to buy or sell. I have some thing to say of vital importance, and he will be wise to see me at once."

Mr. Smucker, who had all the nastier little curiosities about life which dwell so frequently with his sort, wondered if here at last he was to learn some hidden details of his employer's past. Hanby was a handsome and generous man. Women liked him. Perhaps this singular creature had a daughter who had trusted too well.

"Something about his past?" Mr. Smucker suggested.

"Something about my past," flamed the caller.

Mr. Smucker turned on his heel and re-entered the private office.

"It isn't the dogs," said he. "What she wants is a private conversation about the past. I may be wrong, Mr. Hanby—I hope I am—but I think she knows something about your past which may not be creditable to you."

"Thank you, Smucker!" said Hanby. "I can always trust you to take the kindly view. You are quite right. My past was blacker than night. If I had my deserts, I should long ago have been electrocuted. Bring the lady in. I trust she is beautiful!"

Smucker went out, offended. As usual, Hanby had laughed at him. Well, the day was not so far distant when Adolf Smucker would have his turn! He wasted a lot of office time dreaming of what he would do when he was in power.

"Madam, I have persuaded the boss to see you," he said loftily. Then he jumped back. "That black dog nearly bit me!"

"I can rely on his instincts," she said. "You stand convicted as one whom no woman should trust. Do not attempt to deny it, and don't move your throat in that impudent manner!"

She swept past him into his employer's room.

If he had expected youth or beauty, Hanby was disappointed. It was a tall, gaunt old woman who faced him. He judged that some day, now long distant, she had been beautiful. He could see that she was richly dressed and that the jewels she wore were costly. There was a look of tragedy in her smoldering dark eyes.

"I'm afraid you were kept waiting," Hanby began pleasantly.

"I have been kept waiting for thirty years," she said.

"At least you cannot blame me for that." He observed that her eyes were fixed on the photographs of the house he had made arrangements to buy. "I don't think you sent in your card."

"My name is Selenos," she said.

"Selina?" Hanby asked.

"Selenos, Selenos," she repeated.

"If you were a Californian, it would

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

— By —

Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service

Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

be a familiar name. There is the Selenos river."

"And you were named after it? I was born near a big river, too, but I had a lucky escape. Think of me as going through life labeled Housatonic Hanby!"

"The river was named after me," she explained.

Mr. Hanby thought a moment.

"Of course California came into the Union late, didn't it? In the forties, I think."

"The river was named after my family, not after me personally; but I did not come here to discuss my family affairs or to listen to yours. You are about to buy an estate near Pine Plains?"

"I am to complete the purchase this afternoon."

"You must not go there!" she cried dramatically. "I cannot allow it!"

Her manner began to antagonize Hanby.

"Why not?" he inquired coldly.

"It is sacred ground, and you are not fit to dwell there. The idea of its



"I Suspect She Is Desirous of Selling You a Dog."

being desecrated by a large family is intolerable!"

"Really, Mrs. Selenos—" he began.

"Miss," she said. "Above all else I despise and loathe men. Men have always oppressed me. How they have lied and perjured themselves to keep me from the Gray house! But at last I am in a position to buy their silence. What did you give for the place?"

"That, my dear lady," he said suavely, "is entirely my own affair."

"I expected you to lie," she said. "A man of your type would." Miss Selenos took out her check book. "Well, what profit do you decide to make? I wish to buy the place from you."

"It is not for sale."

"You dare to refuse to sell?" Her voice rose so that the dogs barked furiously. "After all my years of waiting, of persecution, of bitterness and exile, you dare to refuse?"

"It is not for sale. I am sorry, but my heart is set on the place as a home. You have had plenty of time. It has been empty for some years."

"I am only now able to buy it. If you will not sell, will you rent it?"

"I am going to live there as soon as it is ready."

"I despise and loathe men," she cried, "and of all men I loathe and despise you most! Of the innumerable houses in this country you deliberately chose this one because it will hurt me!" She raised her right hand to heaven. "Those who have tried to kill me in the past have perished. You and your family and all that is yours I put under a curse. You are going to a house of tragedy, a house wherein walk ghosts of those foully murdered!"

"I'm afraid that's the wrong tack," he said soothingly. "I am not to be frightened away like that. You are not fair to me. A house was for sale, and I bought it. Loathe and despise

me as you will, but do not go away thinking I have wronged you."

"You have wronged me!" she shrieked, her black eyes flashing hate.

"Ah, ha!" muttered Adolf Smucker, who had hitherto listened unsuccessfully. Pausing a moment, he opened the door, as the signal bell had commanded him to. Apparently the strange woman was placing under a comprehensive curse Hanby and all that was his. Smucker gathered that his employer was one of a band of hardened men whose entire energies were expended in keeping Miss Selenos from the Gray house.

"You go there at your peril!" she shouted.

"I accept the risk," said Hanby, quite unruffled.

"My vengeance will follow you," she added.

"Delightful!" Hanby told her. "I shall escape the monotony that my friend's prophesy."

Smucker, who was always nervous in the presence of unusual violence, almost admired Hanby for his calm.

"This way, madam," said Smucker.

He led her to the elevator. Mrs. Smucker in her Weehawken home would enjoy this. When the grille of the elevator door had closed upon Miss Selenos and her pets, Smucker went back to the office smiling. Mrs. Smucker would certainly enjoy this. So would his old father, and the men he talked to on the ferry. As a rule they talked about taxing the rich. Taxing the rich was a passion with Smucker, and he pursued his hobby viciously.

But Smucker did not catch his usual boat. It was late when he returned to his home. By that time the strange visitor and her pets had been driven from his mind by other things. Outside the office a big man, red-faced and jocund, slapped him on the back.

"Say," the stranger said, "ain't you Mr. Hanby's confidential clerk?"

Smucker looked about him. No member of the office staff was visible.

"Yes," he said with confidence. "I am, but you have the advantage of me."

"I want you to fix it so I can get a word in private with the boss. I want to see him right away."

"He goes home at half past four. I stay till six."

"I guess you have to, being his confidential man." The stranger was evidently pondering over something of importance.

"Do you happen to know if he's considering purchasing a big estate up in Dutchess county?"

"He completed the purchase this afternoon," said Smucker.

The news brought dismay to the red face of the stranger. Almost it seemed as if he suffered.

"My G—d!" he cried. "And what with a family!"

"Why shouldn't he buy it?" Smucker asked. "He's got the money, as I happen to know."

"I can't tell you here," the other replied; "but I'd like you to give him a message from me before it's too late. Had your dinner?"

"Not yet."

"How about a bite to eat now?"

Smucker considered the matter with the deliberation that a confidential clerk might be expected to show. He was a heavy eater when another man footed the bill, but he was also prudent. He did not feel drawn to this big, coarse stranger. Furthermore, he wished to be sure that this was a genuine invitation. It would be of no advantage to pay for a meal while in fair Weehawken a pot roast simmered for him.

Perhaps the stranger sensed the economic struggle.

"This is on me," he explained.

"Why?" Smucker demanded.

"Because I guess you have your boss' interests at heart, and I want you to tell him something. I'm pulling out for Chicago tonight, or I'd tell him myself. It's a warning."

"Some reference to a disgraceful past?" Smucker demanded eagerly.

"Some reference to a hell of a future. There's a place down here run by a pal of mine—not much to look at, but the planked steaks, oh, baby! And there's some real beer that the sailors smuggle in."

"If it is really important, I suppose I must consider the welfare of my colleague before my own convenience."

"Planked steak and real beer! Our d—d pot roast!"

Mr. Smucker ate with the peculiar ferocity that is sometimes seen in thin, undersized men.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

*The Mystery of a
Haunted Mansion*

by Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, calls at his office and warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place.

CHAPTER I—Continued

—2—

"Julius Caesar was a small man," he said suddenly, much to his host's amazement. "So was Napoleon. So is Lloyd George." He bent over the table, as if imparting a profound secret. "So was the master of them all—my idol, Lenin." Mr. Smucker touched his receding forehead with a dramatic gesture. "Don't think, because you are twice as big, that you can outmatch me here!"

Again he smote his brow.

"That's all right," said the other pacifically. "Benny Leonard ain't a big man, and I guess he's pretty good. So was the baby that steered Black Sand and won one thousand iron men for daddy. You wouldn't be where you are today if you hadn't got the gray matter. Say, do you believe in haunted houses?"

"I don't believe in haunted houses," Smucker asserted, "nor in the immortality of the soul. I'm away beyond that religious bunk!"

"I didn't believe in haunted houses when I first went up there with Mr. Seymour. I was like you—conceited—bone-headed. I thought I knew it all and then some." The stranger had a cold and compelling eye. He looked at Mr. Smucker in a way that dispelled many of the secretary's theories. He leaned over the table. "It's fine and dandy to hold them beliefs when you ain't been put to the test!"

"I don't get you," said Mr. Smucker irritably.

"You will," said the other simply. "I used to be chauffeur for Mr. Seymour up at the Gray house. His two kids died up there. There's a curse on that place. The man that had it before lost his wife. Nothing the matter with her until she went up to Dutchess county. Bo, there's something in the lake there that calls people to it. The man who had it after Seymour and me was warned. Seymour said he went there on his own responsibility. I'll say Seymour was square about warning him. Well, sir, that man was found drowned in that d—d lake. The doctors couldn't find a thing the matter, except he was drowned. It's a bad place to live in I know! I was there for two years."

The stranger's voice sank to a whisper.

"You feel like people are watching you all the time," he went on. "When you wake up, you think there's people at the foot of your bed, and when you switch on the light it seems like you catch them going away out of the tail of your eye. The help won't stay there. They know! Mr. Seymour—he's a lord or something now—brought out an old cook from England. She went bughouse from what she saw."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" Smucker said.

"No," said the other. "You ain't got the education to understand. Mr. Hanby may. All I ask you to do, if you want to keep your job, is to try and prevent him from taking his family up there to live."

Smucker bitterly resented the strictures on his education. He thought of many cutting things to say, but words did not come easily. His brain seethed with brilliant still-born speeches. After a time he gathered his wits together.

"It amounts to this," he said. "You want me to warn Hanby before it's too late."

"I don't give a d—n whether you do or not," returned the stranger. "I've got it off my conscience. If you want them to go to their death, it's up to you. Any man taking his family there is killing 'em, just as much as if he fed 'em strychnine in their soup. What do I get for this? Not a d—n thing! I'm out a dinner."

"That," said Smucker quickly, "is your own financial liability."

"I'm no piker," said the other. "Hey, Pat, bring a couple of them cigars that Morgan smokes, and some black coffee. My friend here has an important date."

CHAPTER II

At nine o'clock Mr. Smucker stood outside the Gothic entrance of the

building where Hilton Hanby maintained a duplex apartment. Mr. Smucker was in an unusual frame of mind. Whereas his viewpoint was often confused, and his rebellion a silent one, he now saw things with a dreadful clarity. He was vocal. He told the subway guard that ere long those who cheerfully wore the livery of oppressing capitalists would be offered the opportunity to revolt. If they refused, they would toil in deep mines, abject serfs of an emancipated proletariat.

When the liveried elevator starter at the Hanby apartment house intercepted Mr. Smucker and desired to know his business, the Weehawken philosopher saw in this precaution only another instance of the tyranny of the rich; and when, after some delay, he was shown into his employer's rooms, he was overripe for speech. The girl who opened the door looked at him coldly as she demanded his name.

"Tell Hanby, Smucker is here!" he said loudly. "A. Smucker!"

"I asked your name, not what you were," she retorted.

"My name is Smucker—Adolf Smucker—and Hanby has to see me at once!"

He was shown into a small room, which led, as investigation proved, to a gallery running along one side of the apartment. Below him was a



"What Do I Get for This? Not a D—d Thing! I'm Out a Dinner."

spacious drawing-room. Through an arched opening Smucker could see a party of diners. Dining, and it was past nine o'clock!

This, then, was what a duplex apartment meant. The Smuckers had never been quite sure. They were certain only that it was a symptom of the criminal extravagance of the untaxed rich, won at the cost of the workers.

"Old Smucker here?" Hanby exclaimed. "Are you sure?" He turned to his wife. "Dina, do you hear that? Smucker from the office is here."

"That odious little man! Well, he won't mind waiting until we have finished. You'd better send him a cocktail or something. You can't leave us, just as you are going to spring this great surprise." Dina Hanby turned to one of the servants.

"Mary, ask Mr. Smucker to be kind enough to wait, and ask if he'd like a cocktail. See if he will leave a message."

Mr. Smucker looked at the cocktail greedily. Some day pretty girls like this one in neat black and white should bring him cocktails when he thirsted; but they should not sneer at him. If they sneered, they should be lashed.

"Mr. Hanby asks you to wait," said Mary Sloan, not softening the blow. "He's busy. They're in the middle of dinner."

"At half past nine?"

"That's what I said, Mr. Mucker."

"Smucker, Smucker!"

"As he won't be through yet awhile, Mr. Smuckersmucker, do you want to send a message?"

"No!" the man roared. "I won't! Absolutely I will not! Tell him and his wife I come on a matter of life and death. Tell him to leave his boon companions for a moment, and he will go back to them a saddened man!"

With the possible exception of Adolph Smucker, Hanby had not an enemy in the world. His children adored him, and his help remained until removed by marriage or death. Mary hurried back. She was interested in the announcement her employer was about to make. He was

on his feet when she reached the dining room.

"Family and friends!" he began. "Best of families, best of friends! I stand before you tonight at the ripe age of four and forty. I have not only an announcement to make—I have also a confession. I have concealed my name from even my wife. You have hitherto known me as plain Hilton Hanby."

"Not exactly plain," his wife laughed. "I could never have married a plain man!"

"Best of wives!" he murmured. "I have deceived you. Almost half a century ago my mother was drowning in one of our picturesque rivers. A handsome stranger sprang in and rescued her. Later they were married, and her first son she called by the name of that superb stream. My true name is Housatonic Hilton Hanby. At school I was known as Tonic. At college they called me Tony. When I married I dropped the name because my wife was from Cleveland and would not have understood. Tonight I resume it publicly. There are reasons. I am now lord of the manor. I have territorial obligations. Boys and girls, I have been a hard worker, and I have prospered. Fifteen years ago, when I was young in the woolen business, I took, in payment of a bad debt, sixty acres of land near Los Angeles."

"And you've struck oil there?" asked Celia, his eldest daughter.

"No—this is a true story. I have subdivided what was formerly a rocky, goat-infested hill. It is now Wyldwood, famous as the queen of hillside residential parks."

"Dream on!" said Junior, Hanby's son, who was a Yale sophomore, and therefore given to doubting the enthusiasms of his elders.

"No dream, my worthless lad, but a fact! I have the money. Half of it I have spent this afternoon. Know, beloved ones, that I have realized the ambitions of a lifetime. About a hundred miles away, near the peaceful village of Pine Plains, Housatonic H. Hanby owns a lordly estate. In this historic home, this feudal fastness, he will dispense hospitality of the sort his position entails. On his private golf course his friends will pry gobs of turf from their beds as they now do weekly at Wykagyl and Garden City. On his tennis courts, grass and concrete, his children will play under his able tutelage, until they go in triumph to Forest Hills. There Sir Housatonic has a lake, wherein bass and trout await the anglers' fly. There his children will find a swimming pool—not yet built, however—which will make the best that Pasadena and Hollywood have to offer look like frog ponds."

"Oh, dad!" Celia cried. "Is this real, or do we wake up now?"

In answer he passed photographs around. The Gray house was a fact, not a mere hope.

"Wonderful!" said Mrs. Bishop, one of Dina's close friends. "But the help problem in a thirty-room house is appalling. You won't get any one to stay."

"Mary!" Hanby called out. The girl was arranging glasses in the anteroom. "You heard what I've been saying?"

Mary flushed a little.

"I couldn't help it, sir," she apologized.

"Go and ask the others if they'll come to the Gray house."

"They'll come," said Mary eagerly.

"Ask them," Mrs. Bishop commanded. "New York help simply hates the country. We tried it out, and we know."

Mary came back.

"They're crazy to go, sir."

"I don't know how you do it," said Mrs. Bishop.

"It's easy," said Hanby. "We treat 'em as if they were human."

Hanby started as a strange but somehow familiar voice broke in.

"They gave a feast the night before Waterloo!" shouted the voice, from the distant balcony.

"It's that Mucker," Mary said. "The ideal!"

"Smucker," Hanby corrected. "I had forgotten all about him. Tell him I'll be there in a moment."

"He's got his nerve!" said Junior. "Besides, the people who gave the feast before Waterloo won the battle. Dad, I hate that man! I wish you'd fire him. Whenever I go to the office, he tries to head me off from seeing you."

"He wishes to save me money," said Hanby, rising.

Mary descended wrathfully on Smucker. He was conscious that his intellectual superiority was lost on her. In the slangy, expressive phrase of her class, she gave Smucker her opinion of him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, calls at his office and warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings they have received both from Miss Selenos and from Smucker's acquaintance, as some form of practical joke.

CHAPTER II—Continued

—3—

"Who are you, to butt in like that?" she demanded finally.

Hanby came into the room, and she backed out.

"Forgot all about you, Smucker," Hanby admitted. "It was a birthday party. What is it?"

"I wish to see Mrs. Hanby, too," Smucker returned. "It's a matter of life and death."

Hanby saw that the fellow had been drinking, and that the unaccustomed stimulant had let down some of Smucker's barriers of restraint. He had always known that his employee disapproved of him, but he was unprepared for the hate that glared from the red-rimmed eyes. It came as something of a shock.

"Mrs. Hanby is busy," he said. "Also I don't propose to inflict any business troubles on her. I may say that you behaved in very questionable taste in shouting what you did just now. It's none of your d—d business whether I have a few people in to dinner, is it?"

"A matter of life and death," Smucker went on. "I am wasting my time, alarming my own wife, and spending car fare, all for your benefit, and you insult me. I might have expected it!"

"It's nothing to do with office business, then?"

"A matter of life and death. Mrs. Hanby must hear it, too."

Hanby paused a moment.

"All right! I'll send for her."

Dina Hanby had long ago known that in Smucker her husband employed a disaffected and unpleasant sort of man. She bowed coldly to the intruder, who found in her fresh fuel for his wrath. He saw a lovely woman of forty, who looked no more than thirty. He hated her for that. Mrs. Smucker was not dowered with beauty. He saw a splendidly dressed woman who held herself regally. He considered that at forty a woman should be plump, and not concerned about dress or complexion. First of all she should be a good cook.

Mrs. Hanby outraged his sense of feminine proportion. She was slender and graceful. Once, in the office, when the light had been poor, he had mistaken her for Celia.

"I am the death's head at the feast," he said pompously. "You have been imagining yourself the mistress of a great mansion. It is a house of death and disaster!"

"Oh, Hill!" she cried. "What does he mean?"

What the red-faced man had told him an hour or so earlier, Smucker now wove into an intensely dramatic narrative. Mrs. Hanby, listening eagerly, learned that the house in which she and her children were to live had, since its erection more than a hundred years before, been the tomb of all young people who inhabited it. There was a superstitious strain in her, and Smucker could see that she grew uneasy. It irritated him to see Hanby immune from fear.

"Is this true?" she asked her husband.

It relieved her to see him wholly unaffected by the dread that gripped her. She did not understand why he was concerned mainly with getting an accurate description of Mr. Seymour's chauffeur.

"Smucker, it's kind of you to take the trouble to come here," said Hanby, at last; "but you've been the victim of a practical joker. I've had one already, and this is the second."

"You think I'm lying?" Smucker cried angrily.

"No—I think you were used merely as a tool."

"And this is your gratitude!" Bitterness was in Smucker's voice. "It is only what I might have expected!"

Smucker would have been wise to note the unusual look of sternness which passed across his employer's face.

"I will have a taxi called to take you to the subway. It is raining. I'm obliged to you for coming Smucker. You didn't know you were the victim of a man trying to play a joke on me."

While Hanby went to the telephone in a booth outside, Smucker turned on Mrs. Hanby. He reveled in her uneasiness. It gave him, the bringer of it, a gratifying sense of superiority.

"Dance, drink, revel, and oppress while you may!" he said. "The time

is coming when we intellectuals will reign!" He looked through the window, which showed the Hudson. "What do you see there?"

"The river, I suppose," said Mrs. Hanby, puzzled.

"It will be a river of blood some day, from Albany to the sea. It will be reddened with the blood of corrupt politicians, of the officer caste trained at West Point to enslave us. It will be red with the blood of New York capitalists. His blood, your husband's blood—"

Dina Hanby looked at him with flashing eyes. Why did this vindic-



"Be Quiet," She Said, "You Disgust Me!"

tive little creature hate a man who had kept him on year after year simply through pity?

"Be quiet," she said, "you disgust me!"

She turned from him, and met her husband coming in.

"The taxi's coming," he said. "Let me know tomorrow to what expense you've been put. Good night!"

When Smucker had gone, Dina put her hands on her husband's shoulders.

"Dear," she said, "you've always been very good to me. You've given me everything that I wanted and much more than I deserved. I want to ask a favor."

"It is granted," he replied; "even unto the half of my lands and forests, my lakes and lordly manor houses, and the small change I have in my pocket."

"Get rid of that man the first thing tomorrow. He is evil, and hates you."

"All right, Salome," said Hanby. "His head will be on a charger for you any time you care to call for it after ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

As she went back to her guests, she asked him why he laughed at Smucker's story.

"Because Reggie Brophy and Bill Pelham have put up a joke on me. Reggie is mad as a hornet because this cuts out our Wednesday and Sunday foursome. Pelham said he'd prevent me from going there by hook or crook. If that wasn't Reggie feeding old Smucker with that haunted house stuff, I'll drink the lake dry!"

"It might be Reggie," she admitted. "It would be just like him. What about Bill Pelham?"

"Bill is Selina, the patron saint of Pikes and toy Poms. Listen to the story of Miss Selenos, who hates and despises men, particularly me. Bill is about the best actor in our crowd, and he made up pretty well—well enough to fool me for a time."

"But would they do it?" she asked.

"It will be a long wet drink for me if I'm wrong," he laughed.

"Wanted on the long distance, sir," said Mary Sloan.

"Ask Junior to go," said his father.

"I want to tell the rest about Reggie and Bill," he explained to his wife.

Before he could commence his recital, Junior, usually impassive to the point of irritation, burst in.

"It's from the police at Pine Plains," he cried. "Dad, your care-

taker at the Gray house has been murdered!"

Hilton Hanby came back to his guests after ten minutes at the telephone.

"A very unfortunate thing," he told them. "A man named Kerr, whom I engaged through my lawyers only yesterday, has been killed. I must go up tomorrow and see about it."

"I'll go with you, dad," Junior said promptly. "Tell us the details."

"There are none. Kerr was an unmarried man of good character, a veteran of the Spanish-American war, who had been living at Kingston. I wanted a caretaker, because we shan't be living there for a time, and I've been warned that thieves make a specialty of new plumbing fixtures, if there's nobody to guard them."

"But you haven't had time to put any in," said Dina.

"That's the mysterious part of it—there's nothing to steal. Kerr moved a bed and a few household belongings into a ground-floor room, and they have not been disturbed."

"Was he killed inside the house?" Celia demanded.

"No—outside. His body was found in the lake."

Hanby shot a quick look at his wife as he said this. From the little frown she gave he saw that the memory of what Smucker had said lingered with her and assumed a new importance at this tragedy.

"Was he drowned?" Dina asked.

"No—his head was battered in with the handle of a pick. Why they threw him in the lake I can't imagine."

"They did it to conceal the body," suggested Junior. "The weights probably slipped off and the corpse came to the surface again."

"Lakes are always dragged," Hanby replied. "It seems a silly, meaningless crime."

"There's always motivation, if you know where to look for it," Junior answered wisely. "On the whole, it's rather fortunate that I'm going up with you tomorrow."

"The police will be delighted," his father said.

Hanby was annoyed to think that this crime had obtruded itself on his birthday. It was a bad beginning for his ownership of the Gray house.

"The police!" sneered Junior.

"What do the police know of the psychology of crime?"

"Pity them, don't chide them."

Celia mocked. "Poor policemen, they haven't been to Mercersburg and New Haven."

"There's probably a whole lot more in this than you think," Junior went on, unshaken. "On the face of it, it's a crazy, motiveless crime. We may run into all sorts of amazing things—wheels within wheels. Kerr may not have been a caretaker. He may have been sent there to spy on us."

"Then who killed him?" Hanby snapped. He could see that Dina was disturbed more than he liked.

"And why?"

"That we shall find out," replied Junior. "When first you spoke of the Gray house, I thought there was something mysterious about it. Why did it stand empty so long? Haunted, probably. Oh, these things happen! In your generation they scoffed, but we are wiser. In my psychology class—"

"Tell me about it tomorrow," interrupted his father. "Come on, people—let's dance! This is my birthday. Away with gloom!"

He seized Dina, and they began elaborate improvisations on a fox-trot motif.

"You don't think there's anything in it, do you?" Dina asked him. "I mean, anything to do with what that awful little man was saying?"

"Of course not," he answered. "We shall find at the inquest that some roving tramp killed Kerr to steal his savings."

"Tramps!" she said. She was city bred, and distrusted remote places. "There are always tramps, aren't there?"

"They won't worry us. We shall have a house filled with people, and there'll be gardeners and workers. Also—this is my great surprise—I'm taking a year off from business. I can afford it."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, calls at his office and warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings they have received both from Miss Selenos and from Smucker's acquaintance, as some form of practical joke. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker whom they have put in charge of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered.

CHAPTER II—Continued

—4—

"Oh, Hil, how lovely!" she cried. "I've hated your business because it has kept you away from us so much. Can you really afford it?"

"I'm rolling in money," he said gaily. "I bought acreage and sold by the front foot. I'm a boy again!"

"That's nothing new, Housatonic," she laughed. "Ada Bishop really believes that's your absurd name. You'll be a boy when you die!"

"Darling Dina, don't worry about Smucker and his drunken dream. I'll have it out with old Bill tomorrow and Reggie will have to confess that he failed. It was a fool scheme of theirs, anyway."

"When did you ever know Bill Pelham to do anything really foolish?"

"He acted the part superbly. It fooled me completely."

"I don't mean that exactly. It seems so stupid to imagine that any one could be scared away from a house by vague talk like that. Hil, do verify the names Smucker gave you—Mr. Seymour and the others. Promise me!"

"Probably all names that Reggie thought up on the spur of the moment; but I'll ask the agent I bought the place from, if that will satisfy you."

Adolf Smucker was always earlier at the office than the other employees. It gained him a reputation for punctuality, and enabled him to learn much of the firm's business that would otherwise be kept from him.

He was nervous on this particular morning. He had gone home the night before, and had told his family of all the daring and splendid things he had said and done. Mrs. Smucker, usually so admiring and reassuring, had remarked:

"Dolf, you've fired yourself. You might have waited till the two girls was out of school!"

Smucker's father had listened rapturously to the account of the planked steak.

"Real beer!" he said many times. "Not in this life shall I taste real beer again!"

"Nor in the life to come," said his daughter-in-law. "Turn your thought from your sinful appetites." She looked at the clock. "It's time you went to the docks."

Assuredly Adolf Smucker was unhappy. He was filing letters industriously when Hanby sent for him.

"No," said Hanby, as Adolf on-sheathed his newly pointed pencils. "I'm not giving you any letters today. I'm getting rid of you. The cashier will pay you a month's salary."

The Adam's apple tried to burst its bounds.

"I'm sure I've worked long and faithfully for you, Mr. Hanby," Smucker cried. "I don't deserve this!"

"You don't," returned Hanby. "Two weeks' salary would be quite sufficient. Listen to me, Smucker. You've never been either faithful or efficient. God knows why I didn't fire you years ago. I suppose those hard-luck stories you used to spring whenever you were in danger saved you. You told me less than a month ago the same old yarn about paying installments on your house and looking after an old father. Don't interrupt! Your house was paid for three years ago, and your old father is night watchman on some docks near where you live. Your three elder children keep themselves and help support the home. Probably you are comfortably fixed."

Smucker raised his voice.

"Mr. Hanby, I won't be fired without a good reason!"

"You've not even been honest," continued Hanby. "There are petty cash irregularities that can be gone into if you wish it, and certain losses of postage stamps. If you are wise, you won't irritate me any longer."

Smucker withdrew. So they had found out about him! What a trick for a rich man like Hanby, to be watching when an old employee used an office stamp for his private correspondence!

When he was much excited, there were noises in Mr. Smucker's head as of things about to burst. What a day there would be when the intellectu-

als controlled the workers and enslaved the capitalists! He had been one of those who believed that Lenin was to be the savior of America. Lenin had died, but others would be raised up. Smucker's visions of vengeance were stupendous. They died down a little when he reflected that he must face that sound domestic economist, Mrs. Adolf. He drew his month's unearned salary vindictively.

At eleven o'clock Bill Pelham, summoned by telephone, sauntered into Hanby's office. He was a slight man, above middle height, with dark hair and eyes. His was a tired, lined face—the face of a man to whom success has not come. No man was closer to him than Hanby.

"How's the dog market, Bill?" Hanby asked.

"I don't know; but my business is going to the dogs, if that's what you mean. We can't all guess where the wheel is going to stop. Sorry I couldn't get to your dinner party last night. Dina rang me up and told me that my absence was the only blemish."

"That's a fact, Bill." Hanby looked at him keenly. "You don't relish this country life idea?"

"It's a tragedy to me." Pelham groaned. "Your home is my home. You let me come when I want to and leave when I want to. You ask no vain questions, and my grouches never make you angry. I don't know what the devil I shall do. You've been blessed above all the men I know. Your girls are pretty and popular, and yet they don't go guzzling gin with chauffeurs. Your boy is popular, and yet he keeps clean. I've often thought the Hanby family was sent to show that decency was possible even in this jazz life we lead. Do I relish your going? Don't make a jest of it!"

"You'll be at the Gray house, too. You can't drop out of our lives, so don't anticipate it. Funny place, the Gray house! I suppose you read that my caretaker was murdered last night?"

"Haven't seen the morning papers. Tell me about it."

"A puzzling crime," commented Pelham, when he had heard all that his friend knew.

"I may be next," Hanby said, wondering how long Bill could maintain this air of complete innocence. "Poor Dina a widow, with the chance of marrying a better man!"

"Don't!" said Bill, frowning. "I don't like to hear you make a joke of that sort of thing. If Dina died, could you ever marry again?"

"Good G—d, no! Of course not!" replied Hanby, startled.

"She couldn't either. Hil, old man, don't you know that every now and again in this human family two people are born like Dina and you—two people whom nothing can separate but death? I've watched you with other women, and I've watched her with other men—pretty women, too,—and better-looking cusses than you. Tell me, have you ever seen a woman you care a d—n for since you met Dina?"

"No."

"And she's seen no other man. You two are marvels. That family of yours is what it is because of its parents."

"I didn't mean that about Dina marrying," Hanby said, a little shamefacedly. "You know men don't like to seem sentimental. Your friendship has been a great deal to us, Bill, and you are not going to drop out."

"I worship Dina," Bill Pelham said meditatively. "Directly I saw her, twenty years ago, I knew that she was the one woman." He smiled whimsically. "Every Christmas she lets me kiss her under the mistletoe. Once every year! You can bet I shall be with you on Christmas eve, anyway."

Hanby smiled.

"If we lived in some European countries, I should have to challenge you to a duel for that and kill you."

"It's the dark, saturnine villain who does the slaying," Bill remind-

ed him. "I should sneer diabolically, and ask you to name the rib under which you would like my rapier to go." He lighted a cigarette. "Why did you ask me to come?"

"To discuss your Aunt Selina."

"How the devil did you know I had an Aunt Selina? She was a great-granddaughter, a playmate of Martha Washington, if the family history is correct."

"I didn't know it. Look here, Bill—Dina's all upset about some merry spirits who have been trying to frighten me away from Pine Plains. Do you admit coming here and pretending to be Miss Selenos, who hated and despised me above all men, and pinned her faith on dogs?"

"One of us is crazy," replied Bill Pelham. "At the time you say I was here, a dozen men will prove that I was in Chicago. I have played practical jokes, and I hope to again, if I live; but I know nothing of this. Tell me all."

Hanby described not only his experience but that of Adolf Smucker.

"You can count Reggie out, too," Pelham declared. "He's at the bankers' convention in Baltimore. These two people may be fakes, but Reggie and I are innocent. Silly sort of stories to tell!"

"That's what Dina said."

"Is she worried?"

"Just a little. Nothing physical can scare her, but she takes funny psychological excursions. She was reading an English book on 'Haunted Houses' when I left."

"There are such things," Pelham said, gravely. "Glamis castle, for one, and the house where the Wesleys lived. I don't know enough to disbelieve. Look here, Hil—we've got to get to the bottom of this."

"What do you suggest?"

"I've got a clear day. I'll interview the man you bought the place from, and find out about past tenants. Also, I'll see if there was a Selenos family holding land grants in California. I'll probably drop in after dinner. Where are you off to?" concluded Pelham, as Hanby reached for his hat.

"Pine Plains. Junior is motoring me up. I'll be back by dinner time, with luck. Anyhow, wait for me. I've got to see about another caretaker and arrange for the burial of Kerr. Not a cent was found on him, and it seems that he has no relations. I feel responsible, in a way. Junior seems to think that he's going to be a Sherlock Holmes, to the chagrin and confusion of the Pine Plains police."

"There is no such thing as a meaningless crime," Pelham remarked. "Junior may be of some help."

"I hope so. I want to clear up everything, so that Dina and Celia won't have a chance to feel nervous. Dina has a vague idea that the country is dangerous. She was raised in Cleveland's most select residential district, and has always lived in cities. I'm a wild man from the Housatonic feud country, and the idea of tramps doesn't give me a thrill at all."

"If I know Dina," Bill said thoughtfully, "she'll be less worried about tramps than she will about any reputed curse on the place. Like many of those highly strung women, she's psychically sensitive. If all these tragedies happened there, she's bound to hear of them. You've already had a murder on your front lawn."

"That's not serious," Hanby returned. "Some wandering yegg killed the poor fellow for his savings."

"I wish you hadn't sent that Selenos woman off without getting more particulars from her. You calmly shut all avenues of information."

"Her manner was so infernally insulting, Bill. You know I'm not the sort of man to be told that I must sell the house I've selected as a home after inspecting hundreds of places. The poor old thing was crazy."

"What about Smucker?"

"Hooch talked there. Smucker's not too well balanced, either."

Bill Pelham shook his head.

"I don't like it," he said.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid



W.N.U. SERVICE
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

by Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, calls at his office and warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings they have received both from Miss Selenos and from Smucker's acquaintance, as some form of practical joke. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker whom they have put in charge of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham.

CHAPTER III

—5—

At the real-estate offices of Douglas & Smith, Pelham was referred by Douglas, whom he knew, to a Mr. Appleton.

"Appleton will tell you everything," said Douglas. "He has an amazing memory for details, and a great affection for the Gray house. Come in to my office when you're through."

Frederick Appleton was a small, plump man of sixty. He had a distinguished conservatism in dress, a florid complexion, and blue eyes which looked more than usually large owing to the thickness and power of the lenses he wore. After a little preliminary talk, Pelham judged him to be one of those men in relatively unimportant offices who bring to their tasks a certain not displeasing pomposity.

"I have in this book," said Mr. Appleton, pointing to a ledger, "a complete record of the tenants and the expenses of the Gray house for almost thirty-five years. Here you will find the cost of the upkeep of house, grounds, and stables. In my head I have many facts concerning the people who have resided there, which would be out of place in the books of a strictly business firm."

"I take it, then," said Pelham, "that you have an unusual interest in mankind?"

Mr. Appleton's shrewd but kindly face beamed.

"We see a great deal more in this line of work than you would suppose. Oh, dear me, yes! Do I understand that Mr. Hanby desires information about the place?"

"Yes, and Mr. Douglas said that you could tell me everything. He is a close personal friend of Mr. Hanby."

Mr. Appleton's eyes grew a little harder.

"So I inferred from the fact that the sale was not made through me. I knew that Mr. Hanby was interested in the Gray house, but I admit being staggered when Mr. Douglas made the announcement that it was sold."

It was clear to Pelham that the other man was chagrined. No doubt it was the allowable annoyance of an old and trusted employee, who having been consulted for so long is suddenly left out of the firm's confidence in the sale of a property.

"Not that I am criticizing Mr. Douglas," the other went on. "Oh, dear me, no!" His manner was brisk and cheerful again. "What can I do for you, Mr. Pelham?"

"Did you ever know a Miss Selenos?"

"She occupied the Gray house for three years. I remember her well. Poor lady, she loathed and despised men, particularly your humble servant. We had to evict her for non-payment of rent. She had a simple warning, but we had to call the sheriff in. May I ask how you know her?"

"She called on Mr. Hanby and threatened him with all sorts of wild vengeance if he did not sell the place to her."

There was no doubt about Mr. Appleton's interest now.

"I can quite believe it," he said.

"I remember that when we put her out she said that I should be dead within the year. I may say that my good wife was very much relieved when the twelvemonth had passed. I hear that she has at last inherited the great Selenos fortune. They were land-poor for many years."

"You think she's not normal?"

"Insanity in the family," said Mr. Appleton firmly. "The things she said to me were most indelicate, and could only be explained by madness of a hereditary type." The speaker hesitated for a moment. "I suppose she did not mention my name?"

"I think not. I suppose you remember Mr. Seymour?"

"Now Sir Stanford Seymour. Oh, dear me, yes! I ventured to call upon him when in England two years ago. The tragedy had left its mark

on Sir Stanford, but he was always a reserved type."

"What tragedy?"

"His two sons were drowned in the lake."

"Who was the previous tenant?"

"Mr. John Throckmorton. His wife died at the Gray house. A lovely woman! I went to the funeral. Very sad indeed. The lake again."

"It seems to have been a house of death," Pelham commented. He did not relish the idea of the Hanby family inhabiting it as much as he had done. "Who came after Sir Stanford Seymour?"

"He sublet it—subject to our approval, of course—to Mr. Crosby Norton. Mr. Norton lost his four children."

"In that same d-d lake?"

"I regret to say yes." Mr. Appleton looked shrewdly at his visitor. "Have you much influence with Mr. Hilton Hanby?"

"I am his closest friend."

"Do you suppose that you could influence him to reconsider his purchase?" Mr. Appleton was consider-



Mr. Appleton's Eyes Grew a Little Harder.

ate and sympathetic. "I am not a believer in haunted houses. I try to be skeptical in such matters, but there seems to be a strange fate about the Gray house. It always takes toll of the young and happy. Those Seymour children, for example—high-bred, strong, happy boys who could swim excellently; yet they are dead, and at Sir Stanford's death his title goes to a distant cousin. Then the Norton children, three girls and a boy—the lake got them, too. I tell myself it was a coincidence. Perhaps! Perhaps!" His manner grew more confidential. "Tell me, Mr. Pelham, did you ever hear such a chain of coincidences as that?"

"It's most disturbing news," admitted Pelham.

"It seems to me," said the other, "that if these unhappy facts were duly brought to Mr. Hanby's notice, he could not disregard them. No doubt Miss Selenos' manner annoyed him, and he disregarded her story on that account; yet"—Appleton tapped the big ledger—"the facts are all down here in my own handwriting."

"I'm afraid whatever I said would make him all the more determined to go. He is a skeptic, and opposition makes him ready to fight. I don't think anything would make him give it up."

"I have done my duty, then," said Appleton briskly. "No doubt he is right, and these deaths were due to lack of care. I have here a letter, with estimate inclosed, from a Pine Plains carpenter, who agreed to put the rustic bridge in order. That

bridge, Mr. Pelham, crossed the lake at its deepest part. The Seymour boys were fishing from it when it gave way. I rather think the Norton children were found near there, too."

Appleton turned to the estimate.

"You see, Mr. Pelham, these tragedies might have been averted if the owner had seen fit to expend sixty-four dollars and eighteen cents. It was owing to my influence that the lake was completely filled in, and the stream feeding it was diverted to the lower lake. Instead of five acres of water filled with stumps, which made fishing difficult, Mr. Hanby has now a twenty-acre lake with good bass and trout in it and not a pickerel to do damage. I have fished there every year, and I know. I wonder if Mr. Hanby would extend the courtesy to me?"

"I'll answer for him," said Pelham. "I'm a fisherman myself. Thank you for what you've told me."

"Well?" Douglas asked, a little later. "Get what you wanted?"

"And more," said Pelham. "The Gray house has a dismal atmosphere about it, to my way of thinking. Appleton seems to think that for less than sixty-five dollars all those lives might have been saved."

"I think he's right," said the other. "The old lake was within a few yards of the house, and very deep. It was too much of a temptation to children. The banks were steep, too as I recall them."

"Then you don't believe in the curse theory?"

Douglas lighted a cigar before answering Pelham's question.

"In my office, during business hours, the idea seems silly; but sometimes, when I can't sleep at night, I'm not so sure. I've Highland blood in my veins, remember, and race memories of haunted houses, and curses that descend from generation to generation. Don't ask me, Bill."

"You give me the same sort of comfort that Appleton does. He tells me what cures his blood, and then explains it all away by a carpenter's estimate that missed the mark."

It was not a very comfortable motor trip for the Hanbys. When Junior drove, his father thanked God that his will was made and his affairs were in order. When Hanby was at the wheel, his son struggled between a feeling of pride that his progenitor still had his nerve left, and a fear that never again would he tread the campus at New Haven.

"Corking road!" Junior commented, when Pine Plains was in sight.

"Was it a road?" his father demanded. "I'm relieved to know that I thought it was a race track."

"Where's the Gray house?"

"We passed it on the last lap."

"You might have pointed it out to me," remarked young Hanby.

"Why? I thought, as we went by that neither of us would ever have the opportunity to inhabit it."

Junior laughed.

"This old bus can certainly clip off the milestones!"

"Don't boast. You only scratched the one you hit."

"It beats me," his son remarked philosophically, "why cows don't know their own minds. I didn't dream that beast was going to give us a race."

"Slow down, Junior!" his sire commanded. "We've got to stand well in this community."

Hilton Hanby stepped from the car, to be greeted by the local police chief and an officer from Kingston.

"This is my son, Sherlock Gaboriau Hanby," he said. "Is the inquest over?"

"Yes," said the local man. "I wish you'd been here before."

"Any clew to the murderer?" Junior asked.

"Not a one."

Junior smiled. He knew exactly how it would be.

"But there's a mighty interesting development. This fellow Kerr wasn't Kerr at all. He had a whole string of aliases. We finger-printed him, and fitted the right name to him. Your caretaker, Mr. Hanby, was Red Chapin, wanted for 'most everything up to murder.'

"That's interesting," Hanby exclaimed. "A murderer murdered?"

He was not pleased to think that such a man had been in his employ although engaged by an agent.

"His references was stolen from some Spanish war veteran named Kerr. We'll find out all about it soon. Also he had Kerr's discharge papers and a medal. Want to look at him, sir?"

"Not on your life!" said Hanby, who detested morbid things.

"I'd like to," Junior suggested.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings, as some form of practical joke. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker whom they have put in charge of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, explains to Pelham, that a dangerous pond near the house, in which several children have been drowned, has since been filled in, but he urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Hanby and Junior learn that the caretaker was known to the police as "Red Chapin" and had a bad record.

CHAPTER III—Continued

—6—

It was his first opportunity to see a man with a price on his head. Death had revealed with marked emphasis the unsocial qualities with which Red Chapin had been dowered. What he had tried during life to hide was now plain for all the world to see—the loose mouth, the short cranium, the thrust-forward jaw. Junior shuddered a little.

"What do you suppose he wanted the job of looking after an empty house for?"

"It's my belief he was hiding," said the policeman from Kingston. "I've checked up on him pretty well. He kept himself to himself in Kingston. He received no callers or mail. His landlady says he was suspicious of strangers. Red was always one to frequent pool rooms and places like that; but this trip he kept away from them. Why? He knew they was after him."

"Who?" Junior asked eagerly, forgetting that he was listening open-eyed to a policeman ignorant of psychology.

"The man that bumped him off. We shan't probably ever know who. We've got Red, and somebody else'll pick up his pals when their time comes."

The policeman pointed to the dead man's big, roughened hand.

"That's the hand that squeezed the life out of a Salt Lake City detective. Strangled him in a telephone booth, he did, and not a soul near by heard it. That's the hand that shot half a dozen men. Look at that face, Mr. Hanby, and, when you see another like it, watch out!"

"I will," Junior said quickly.

He envied the professional his poise at a moment like this. So occupied was he with this intimate touch of crime that he did not notice until the car slowed down to pass Ardenia that he had again missed the Gray house.

"Wow!" he said, a mile or so further on, "you missed that truck by little less than an inch!"

"You exaggerate," replied his father. "It wasn't half an inch. I'm in a hurry to get home. Bill Pelham may have news."

They did not speak again for some time. Then Hanby surprised his son by asking questions concerning Leslie Barron, the youth to whom Celia gave a good deal of her time.

"Les is a peach," said Junior warmly. "If I were he, I wouldn't stand the way Celia behaves. One day she's sugar and the next vinegar."

"I've seen that," Hanby returned. "That's not unusual. I did not mean that. Is he courageous? Would he be a useful man in a tight place?"

"You ought to have seen the scrap he put up against a strong-armed waiter that tried to put him out of a roadhouse last April! The waiter was an old heavyweight pugilist, and he certainly could punish. Les knew he was outweighed and outclassed, and he had a chance to duck; but he isn't that sort of a mother's boy. He was out for twenty minutes."

"That's interesting," his father commented. "I didn't think the languid Les had a fight in him; but you don't expect me to approve of a rowdy boy being thrown out of a questionable roadhouse, I hope?"

"It wasn't a questionable place," Junior retorted. "You've taken mother there. Les isn't rowdy—he's just fastidious. He complained of a big fly in his coffee. That roused the waiter to fury, and he said that Les could drink it or not, but he had to pay."

Junior wondered why his father should ask about Leslie's gameness. Mr. Hanby was in an unusually thoughtful mood.

"You're pretty husky," he said presently. "What do you weigh?"

"A hundred and seventy stripped," Junior told him.

"My weight to a hair. Les isn't so much, is he?"

"He and Bill weigh a hundred and fifty-five stripped. Why? Going to promote some boxing exhibitions?"

"Nothing like that."

"What's on your mind, dad?"

"Sherlock Lupin, it would take more than your admitted skill to find out, because I don't know myself. I apologize for it. For the first time, the Gray house gave me a shiver as I passed it. This murder was the cause. I don't revel in crime. I hate it. I like people to be happy and harmonious. Something inside me leads me

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

— By —

Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service

Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

almost invariably to dependable people. I wouldn't have picked this fellow Red Chapin to have watched a dog pound, if he was half as bad as you say. I took that man Smucker over with the business, the d—d, dirty anarchist! I caught myself calculating my forces if anything unpleasant happened up at the Gray house. Bill Pelham would tackle a lion single-handed. He's been proved. I wondered a little about Leslie."

"Dad, you don't really think there's anything wrong with that new place?"



"I'm Not Going to Be Frightened Out of It by Any Rude Old Woman."

Inquired Junior, his eyes sparkling at the thought.

"I'll have to disappoint you by saying no. It was just a passing fit of depression. It has gone."

"I'll be gone, too, if you don't cut the speed down," his son cautioned. "Slow down! There's a motor cop in the offing."

CHAPTER IV

Bill Pelham was waiting for them.

"Won't take me ten minutes to get into clean clothes," said Hanby. "I've got strange news, Dina."

"So has Bill," she retorted.

"Mine is of a tragic nature."

"You've nothing on me," said Bill. "I'm in the wholesale tragedy business."

Dina, Pelham, and Hanby discussed the matter in the library. Hanby listened to what Appleton had told his friend.

"Then Smucker wasn't lying," he remarked. "Appleton corroborates his story. It means that some one wants to prevent us living there. What could the reason possibly be?"

"I give it up," said Pelham. "Do you think the police have the right dope on the Chapin murder?"

"What else could it be?"

"That these same people who want to keep you out started to terrorize you by murdering him. It may be that he was an innocent victim. Of course, we know that he was wanted by the law, and that in a sense his removal is a blessing to society, but all the same he may have intended to be an honest watchman for the time being."

"Dina," said Hanby presently, again conscious of his wife's unusual depression, "if you are scared at the prospect of going up there, I'll open negotiations with Miss Selenos, who particularly loathes and despises me. What about it?"

"Think twice before you answer," Bill Pelham warned her.

"I haven't even seen the place yet," she said, smiling. "I'm not going to be frightened out of it by any rude old woman. Hil, I believe she's at the bottom of all this mystery. I'm not going to rob my Housatonic of his manor!"

"Housatonic?" Bill queried. "What's that?"

"Hil's real name. At college you called him Tony."

"It's a new one on me," said Bill.

"Blame your Aunt Selina for it," Hanby declared. "She got me going with her California rivers. I tell you that old hag has a face like the Furies. She may be mad and vindictive, but

there's something on her mind more than a passing whim. I don't know but Dina's right. She said I should meet disaster, ruin, and even death. There's some mystery about my pleasure house in Dutchess county."

"Nothing will keep me away from it now," Dina asserted. "We shall have four able-bodied men in the place all the summer."

"Four?" her husband demanded. "You are not counting fourteen-year-old Tim as an able-bodied male, are you?"

"There will be you, Junior, Leslie, and Bill."

"Me?" Pelham cried.

"Of course! On your own confession, you've nothing to do until your company is reorganized in the fall. Danger calls, and we need you. I've already picked out your suite."

"Dina, you are taking great chances. Even dull-witted Hil, the last to scent the danger, knows that I'm in love with you."

"That makes you so much the safer. You shall work, believe me. I'm crazy to have some stately old-world gardens. You shall be my man with the hoe."

"I sign on here and now," said Bill. "Where are you going?"

"I promised to tell Tim about the inquest. My children have the modern interest in crime. Don't go! I shan't be very long."

Pelham looked at Hanby almost wistfully.

"Hil, was that a joke on me or a genuine invitation?"

"Don't you want to come?"

"Except for the reason that your family is my family, that I shall live rent free and make enough out of you at pool to spend an affluent winter—no!"

"That's settled, then," said Hanby. "Honestly, Bill, I shall be glad to have a man like you, with nerve and courage, around the house."

"That sounds as if you anticipated trouble."

"Oddly enough, I do. I must be getting old, but driving back today I began to make excuses for not living in the Gray house. Subconsciously, I was actuated by fear. Most people patronize their subconscious mind nowadays, but it's the subconscious mind that gives you the real danger signals. I'm going up there, but I'm not going up there with the idea that every prospect is as pleasing as it looks. I'm on guard!"

"If that's so, I demand a salary as well as free board and entertainment. Make it five dollars a day, and replace all clothes stained with gore in the exercise of my duty with ones of equal or greater value. The trouble with you is that after piking along on thirty thousand a year and a mere duplex apartment, you've got twice that amount and a thirty-room mansion. It has gone to your poor weak head. You are paying too much attention to poor Aunt Selina."

"You didn't see or hear her," Hanby reminded him.

"She's merely a crank. One morning, thirty long years ago, in the bosky dells that are now yours, she met a rustic swain and pursued him with love. Wisely he jumped into the lake and was drowned. It is a sacred spot to her."

"What about the Seymour chauffeur?"

"An ignorant, good-hearted, generous man, fond of children. His simple, untutored mind believes that evil spirits dwell there because his boss children ventured on an unsafe bridge and were drowned. Probably he has a dozen kids himself. As to Red Chapin, he took refuge there and was killed by his pals whom he had double-crossed. Perfectly plain, as I see it."

"Maybe," Hanby said slowly, "it is merely annoyance that the house I bought for Dina should be mixed up in this tragic business." He spoke almost irritably. "I hate gloom and tears and death. When I first saw the Gray house, I said, 'Here is a place where people have been happy.' Pretty rotten picker, eh, Bill?"

"Your family will take the curse off anything," said the other. "Dina will have us all dancing as happily as ever. Junior will bring his crowd, and Celia will import hers. I miss my guess; the result won't be a very interesting mixture. Dance on!" he concluded dramatically. "Outside your window your faithful house detective will be watching—the simple-minded sleuth whose meager pay is five dollars a day, and extras. During the day I shall be hoe man in chief to Dina. At dusk I am the house detective. I'll get a deputy's badge, in case I have to make arrests."

There was a knock on the door, and Mary Sloan entered.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

*The Mystery of a
Haunted Mansion*

by Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby, prosperous New York merchant, has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant of the Gray house, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings, as some form of practical joke. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker whom they have put in charge of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, explains to Pelham, that a dangerous pond near the house, in which several children have been drowned, has since been filled in, but he urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Hanby and Junior learn that the caretaker was known to the police as "Red Chapin" and had a bad record. Hanby considers asking Leslie Barron, long an admirer of Celia, and a husky youth, to join the house party. Mrs. Hanby declares she likes the house.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

—7—

"You are wanted on the long distance, sir," she told Hanby.

"Hello!" said Hanby a few seconds later. "Yes, this is he speaking."

The voice that answered seemed far away but very distinct. It was plainly that of an educated woman.

"I saw you at Pine Plains this afternoon. You are interested in the murder?"

"Naturally," he replied. "May I ask to whom I'm talking?"

"The name would convey nothing. Besides, it would not be the true one."

"Why not?"

"You'll see presently. Are you still determined to live at the Gray house?"

"Why not? I bought the place for that purpose."

"When you bought it, you had no idea of its history. You did not then know that it takes toll of every family inhabiting it. Happy families have gone there, but never a happy family left it."

"I am satisfied that with proper care these accidents could have been avoided."

"That's what the real estate people said when they wanted you to buy the place. They lied, naturally. All they want is their commission. Mr. Hanby, in your heart of hearts you know there is some inexplicable but dreadful curse on it."

"I am not weak-minded enough to credit such nonsense." He spoke with unusual violence. "With common precaution the accidents could have been avoided."

"Who told you so?"

"A Mr. Appleton." Hanby suddenly realized that he was an employee of the firm which sold the house. He recalled how Appleton had seemed to alter during the interview. In the beginning he had seemed to believe that something beyond human explanation hovered about the Gray house. Then he had become brisk and businesslike, and had spoken of carpenters' estimates.

"Of the firm of Douglas & Robinson?" There was contempt in the speaker's voice. "I see! Merely one of their clerks. May I ask what precaution that he could suggest would have saved the life of your unfortunate caretaker?"

"That was due to one of the ven dettas common to the underworld."

Far away the musical laugh came over the wire.

"I don't see anything amusing in that," Hanby snapped.

"But you will," said the unknown. "It strikes me as very, very funny. May I ask you if you ever saw Red Chapin, Mr. Hanby?"

"No," he returned. "I don't relish that sort of thing in life or in death."

"I did. He was six feet in height, had hair of reddish brown, and carried himself very erect. This was a pose. He was pretending to be an ex-soldier. His usual habit was to slink along furtively, like the murderer he was. Now, Mr. Hanby, you are six feet in height, and you walk as erectly as ever a West Pointer did. We did not know you had engaged a man to watch the Gray house. Red Chapin was not killed because of a vendetta. He was mistaken for you!"

"I don't believe a word of it!" Hanby said violently.

"It would be safer for you and your family if you did. Next time there will be no mistake!"

"Are you threatening to kill me?"

Again the musical laugh was heard.

"That would be most unwise over the telephone wires, wouldn't it? No—we are warning you that it would be safer to take your family somewhere else. Why not a trip round the world? Or there are wonderful places in Long Island. You will find Pine Plains very cold in winter."

"If this is a joke, it's a rotten one!" Hanby cried angrily.

"It is more a joke to me than to you," said the unseen woman. "I scarcely think your family will consider it a joke when you are found dead; but perhaps they may. One never knows. Well, this is your last warning."

At this point Hanby was cut off. He shouted for Junior. Junior, startled by the unusual vigor of his father's voice, came running.

"I've just had a long-distance," said his father. "It is very important that I should trace from what station it was sent. Now, Father Sherlock, do your stuff!"

"You bet!" replied Junior eagerly.

"It was a woman who spoke—an educated woman with a youngish voice," continued Hanby. "I'm in the library with Mr. Pelham. Let me know what happens."

Pelham looked up as his friend entered. There was something different about him now. The look of inde termination was gone.

"Hil, you look as if you were about to scrap with some one, and rather enjoyed the prospect."

"That's exactly how I feel," Hanby said. "Bill, it is nothing new to a five-dollar-a-day detective to hear that



"Dad's Perfectly Safe," Celia Retorted.

his client has been threatened with violent death, so you won't be shocked to learn the sad news."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Simply this—a woman with a charming voice—Junior's trying to find where she talked from—said that Red Chapin was killed because they mistook him for me. My turn, it appears, is next on the list. All will be forgiven if I take the family to Europe or buy something on Long Island." Hanby squared his shoulders. "The old subconscious mind was right—I am in danger; but now that I know it consciously, the feeling of depression has gone. Bill, your salary is now five dollars and twenty five cents a day. You can use the extra quarter for an insurance policy. You probably won't need any more clothes. Not a word! Dina's coming."

The two men stood up as Mrs Hanby came into the room.

"I've never been so thrilled in my life!" she cried. "The impertinence of the creature, in assuming that your death would be a joke!"

Hanby groaned. He saw it all. Dina had picked up the telephone up stairs in her bedroom, and had listened to the whole conversation.

"Which is it to be?" he asked. "Around the world or Long Island?"

"It's going to be Pine Plains," she declared. "Hil, you didn't recognize the voice, did you?"

"Never heard it before. I could only recognize that it was the voice of an educated woman, youngish and perfectly at ease."

"It was an Englishwoman's voice," Dina asserted.

"I'm not sure. The inflection might have been put on to deceive. Moreover, lots of our actresses get into that way of talking. You'd surely think that throaty contralto of Elsie Ferguson's was English, if you didn't

know that she was born in Manhattan."

"This woman was English," Dina said, "and I'll prove it. She didn't say, as we do, 'around the world.' She said 'round the world.' The English always do that. An American woman would say 'on Long Island. If you recall it, she said 'in Long Island.' That's like the English. They say 'in the street' when we say 'on the street.' I'm certain it was an Englishwoman."

Mrs. Hanby paused as Junior came in, wearing an air of importance.

"The call came from a booth at Grand Central," he reported. "It's impossible to trace it any more than that. It wasn't long distance at all."

Hanby rang the bell for Mary Sloan.

"Why did you say I was wanted on the long-distance?" he inquired, when the maid appeared.

"The lady said, 'This is long-distance. I want Mr. Hilton Hanby.'"

When Mary had gone, Hanby turned to his wife.

"The woman must have spoken some distance from the instrument because it sounded like a long-distance. Very carefully done! Dina, do you still want to go through with it?"

"Of course I do! Do you suppose I'll have any other woman threatening my man?"

Dina's eyes flashed. Pelham looked at her closely. It was a new Dina to him. It was a woman who would fight like a tigress to save the man who was dear to her.

Pelham knew that no word of his would sway the Hanbys. Standing together, as they invariably did, they were not to be deterred.

"As the house detective," he said, "I realize that my clients have stampeded. I only recommend that no member of this household should go up there alone. Safety in numbers! All expeditions are to be accompanied by the house detective, or he resigns. All traveling expenses incurred by the said detective must be paid for by his principals."

Celia and Leslie Barron interrupted them. Celia, at nineteen, was one of those lovely, vital children of the age, incapable of fatigue, eager for fun, gifted with much wisdom where men were concerned, and intolerant of an age where chaperonage flourished and young people went to bed early.

Leslie Barron was a silent youth. Through family influence he might some day occupy a distinguished position in his father's bank. New Haven had just lost him, but he liked college so well that he was returning for postgraduate work—which, he thought, would be less tedious than work in the elder Barron's bank. It was his aim in life to marry Celia, but of her consent he was not yet sure.

"Well, Dina darling," said Celia, putting her arm about her mother. "Why this high color and the sparkling eyes? Has dad found out that you love Bill?"

"I'm fighting mad because I listened in and found your father talking to an Englishwoman with a lovely voice."

"Dad's perfectly safe," Celia retorted. "Sometimes I think we're not modern enough. I don't know a single household where the father and mother are like you two. Wandering parents, all of them. Sometimes I think mother is a sort of ingrowing vamp."

"She is," laughed Hanby. "Whenever I try to escape, she practices her devilish wiles on me. Do you think you can stand Les for a whole summer? I want him up at Pine Plains."

"You must dilute him with other boys," she retorted. "I couldn't stand having nothing but Les all that time." Celia looked at him, laughing. "See how eagerly he snaps at your invitation!"

"I accepted last week," said Les. "as soon as Junior knew about this new house. I've made plans for a golf course already."

"Who was the lady with the lovely voice?" Celia asked.

She knew that she had interrupted an unusual conversation.

"I'm not going to give myself away before your mother and all these witnesses. Go away and dance. We will join you presently."

When she had gone, Hanby turned to Pelham.

"Dina and I don't want Celia and the others to know. Junior is different. We shan't be going for a month, and things may have explained themselves by then."

"I hope not," said Bill Pelham. "I want to earn my money."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, explains to Pelham, that a dangerous pond near the house, in which several children have been drowned, has since been filled in, but he urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Hanby and Junior learn that the caretaker was known to the police as "Red Chapin" and had a bad record. Hanby considers asking Leslie Barron, long an admirer of Celia, to join the house party. Mrs. Hanby declares she likes the house. Pelham becomes a member of the household, with the official title of "house detective." Over the telephone Hanby is warned by a woman not to subject his family to the dangers of the Gray house. Leslie Barron arrives making four able-bodied members of the Hanby household.

CHAPTER V

—8—

During the weeks before the Hanbys could occupy the Gray house there were no more unpleasant messages or telephonic communications to disturb them. Only one person had interested himself sufficiently to call up Hanby at his office.

The voice proclaimed itself as belonging to a name so indistinctly enunciated that Hanby was not sure whether it was Bayles, Vales, Bailey or Valley. When he tried to make sure which, the voice replied with no clarifying effect. Hanby thought he might get it later in the conversation.

"I am calling you up," said the stranger, "to congratulate you on your purchase of the Gray house. You may recall that we met some time ago at the Metropolitan club."

Hanby remembered lunching at this distinguished club and being introduced to several influential men.

"Thank you," he said cordially. "You know the house?"

"Very well. I looked over it recently with the intention of purchasing it, but the accommodation was insufficient. As you perhaps know, I bought a larger place at Westbury."

Assuredly this was a Metropolitan club member! Thirty rooms were not enough for him.

"I want to ask you a special favor," the voice went on. "I am deeply interested in ornithology. I have even contributed to the literature of the subject. One of the reasons why I considered the Gray house was that it offers a natural sanctuary for birds. There was a lake there, which was filled in not long ago, and is now covered with dense creepers and flowering shrubs. Innumerable birds take shelter there—little birds, I mean—immune from their winged enemies and from man. I beg of you to preserve this retreat inviolate. Our rarer birds are dying out in an alarming fashion."

"What exactly do you want me to do?" Hanby asked.

"I want you to do nothing. Leave the place to the songsters. A bird sanctuary is not unsightly. To me it is beautiful. What, after all, are five acres out of two hundred? You will be rewarded by seeing some of our most exquisite song birds." The unknown ornithologist reeled off a list of names that made his bearer dizzy: "Purple finch, vesper sparrow, song sparrow, nuthatch, chickadee, ovenbird, junco, snowflake, phoebe, bobolink, indigo bunting, rose-breasted grosbeak, kinglet, wren and others."

"It's a fine idea," said Mr. Hanby warmly. "I'm glad you told me. I was just going to have the place cleared out, because I thought it was useless. I love birds myself, and I'm all for preserving them."

"I was told that you were a high type of citizen, Mr. Hanby," the voice said gratefully. "I hope to do myself the honor of calling upon you soon. Good-by!"

"Now, who the devil was it?" Hanby asked himself.

He spoke of the bird sanctuary at dinner. His family was enthusiastic. "It's a beautiful idea," said Dina. "I was going to put a sunken rose garden there, but we have heaps of other places."

"Why do birds go there?" Tim Hanby asked.

"Because they get food and water there." His father had refreshed his memory on the subject. "There's a spring that keeps the shrubs and bushes alive and flourishing. Black berries and other wild fruits and berries grow there in profusion."

"Did you say that the man's name was Bayles?" Dina asked.

"Or Bayliss, or Bailey—something like that. He seemed to think that I ought to remember him. He's going to call on us. He's probably a multi-millionaire. Tim, I'm going to put you on your honor not to sit by that sanctuary and snipe those trusting warblers and orioles."

Tim, Hanby's second son, had a shotgun and a small rifle, and a passion for using them. A struggle went on in him.

"I promise," he said.

Tim's parents knew that, mischievous as the boy was, he would keep his word. He solaced himself with the thought that there were many rabbits to be had, not to mention crows, hawks, and bats.

"We are to regard ourselves as guardians of the birds who trust us. I look to the house detective to enforce these rules."

"Aye, aye, chief!" said Bill Pelham.

"I like the idea of a house being a sanctuary," Hanby went on. "Once within its walls, and outside worries may not introduce. The Gray house sanctuary—a place sacred to happiness! Happiness is not a vice, as they used to regard it when my grandparents were young. It's a sacred thing."

"Listen to the crane talking!" Celia scoffed.

"Crane?" he said.

"The Frankcrane bird," she laughed.

"I'd rather be that than a mocking bird," her father countered. "Wait till we get up there, mes enfants, and I'll undertake, old, decrepit, and pollyannish though I may be, to beat you at almost every sport there is—tennis, golf, swimming, and equestrian."

"When were you on a horse?" Junior demanded.

Young Hanby had a wholesome respect for his father as an opponent at tennis or golf, but he had never imagined him as setting out to witch the world with noble horsemanship.

"Know, my son," replied Hanby, "that, like all great Americans, I was reared on a farm. Your grandfather's homestead bordered the beautiful stream after which I am named. If there are any of the old-timers left in that district, ask them what sort of a seat I had on horseback, and you will find that I rode in many a pony race ere I was Tim's age."

"The next thing to hear is that mother rode over the jumps at the Garden show," said Junior.

"Your mother rode discreetly on a side saddle years ago in Cleveland," said Dina; "and she is going to do it again."

"Junior," said Bill Pelham, "never think you can put over anything on those parents of yours. It can't be done. It is my turn to state that in my days of affluence I kept a saddle horse at Durland's."

With these kind but firm words the juvenile members of the Hanby clan relapsed into sulky silence, convinced against their will that, after all, they were not the absolute lot.

"I wish my family was like this," remarked Leslie Barron. "We do nothing but quarrel at every meal. That's the main reason I'm going back to New Haven. I believe happiness is catching. I feel a different being here."

"You don't mean you feel actually happy here?" Celia asked.

"Absolutely," he answered.

"Family, friends, all!" Celia cried. "Look at a happy man, and then wonder what he looks like when he's sad!"

Les flushed a little.

"I feel happy inside," he said, defending himself.

"He smiled last Tuesday afternoon," Junior said. "I saw him. Sure he's happy. Let him alone, Celia."

"Shut up!" said Les. "She lets me alone too much as it is. Up there—"

"At Pine Plains," Celia told him. "Lona will be your constant companion."

Lona was the sixteen-year-old girl now at boarding school.

"Not this time," Dina remarked. "Lona wants to go to Europe with three other girls and one of the teachers, and we're going to let her go."

"Look!" Celia cried. "His daily smile! And poor Lona simply wor-

ships him. He has driven her abroad, and now he laughs at the havoc he has wrought!"

When built, at the end of the Eighteenth century, the Gray house had been a square mansion of stone in twenty acres of meadow land inclosed with a five-foot wall. Succeeding tenants had enlarged it to its present size, and had acquired two hundred acres more of meadow and woodland. Ivy, Virginia creeper, wistaria, and trumpet vine fought for its walls, giving it a softness of outline of which its builder could not have dreamed.

Very strongly built, its exterior was in perfect condition. War had passed it by, and time had treated it gently. Before the Hanbys moved into it, a careful renovation of the interior had given it a new and dignified beauty. The grounds had been molded to the new owner's desires. The Hanbys had moved from a duplex apartment into a satisfying home.

Dina breathed a sigh of content.

"I have always wanted just such a place as this," she said, squeezing her husband's hand.

"You never told me so," he replied reproachfully.

"I thought it was the unattainable," said Dina. "Let's go through every single room together. It's a home for our children, and Celia's children, and the children of Celia's children. It's adorable! I didn't know the hall was as big as this," she added, pausing in a lofty apartment thirty feet long and nearly as wide. "This wasn't according to the plans, surely?"

"I had it altered," Hanby told her. "Incidentally, I had to reduce our thirty rooms to twenty-eight. Isn't this a whale of a place for dances?" Eagerly he pointed out the great open fireplace. "The flue goes right up through the center of the house. That's a valuable feature. No heat is lost, as it would be if the shaft were on the outside."

Dina moved toward it. Over the green marble mantelpiece was something carved in old-English letters:

"THE SANCTUARY CLUB"

"Rules"

"No member shall do or say any thing of which another member disapproves."

"No member shall disapprove of what any other member says or does."

"Gets 'em coming and going!" laughed Hanby. "Great idea, isn't it? Now for the billiard room. That's for Bill's special benefit. He can trim any amateur that holds a cue."

Dina looked from her own windows down on the tangled thatch of bush, bramble, and flower that was sacred to the birds.

"There's a scarlet tanager," she cried. "Look, Hil—the beautiful thing!"

From another window the glittering lake could be seen. As she looked, Celia, Les, and Junior, in bathing kit, raced toward it. Tim was elsewhere, bent on slaying rabbits. There was not a hint in the whole place of the tragedies which had happened within its bounds. Summer bragged on every tree.

The first dinner was one of those happy functions at which every one talks vivaciously and no one troubles to listen. Exclamation points ended every sentence. Les smiled openly and the house detective was off duty.

"My job's a sinecure," said Bill Pelham. "I really had no right to take it, after accepting the honor of being hoe man in chief to Dina."

"Your work begins tomorrow," Mrs. Hanby told him. "I want you to survey a place for a sunken rose garden."

"I'll set the alarm for daybreak," he said.

He was up very early next morning. Only Tim, rifle in hand, equaled him. Tim was after the early rabbit and the unheeding squirrel. Pelham had decided on a location for the rose garden when Celia stopped before him.

"To labor that we love we risk betimes, and go to it with delight," he quoted.

Celia sat down on a grassy bank.
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, explains to Pelham, that a dangerous pond near the house, in which several children have been drowned, has since been filled in, but he urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Hanby and Junior learn that the caretaker was known to the police as "Red Chapin" and had a bad record. Hanby considers asking Leslie Barron, long an admirer of Celia, to join the house party. Mrs. Hanby declares she likes the house. Pelham becomes a member of the household, with the official title of "house detective." Over the telephone Hanby is warned by a woman not to subject his family to the dangers of the Gray house. Leslie Barron arrives making four able-bodied members of the Hanby household. A phone call from a man who declares he is an old acquaintance of Hanby's and interested in ornithology, but whom Hanby cannot identify, urges him to preserve a part of the grounds as a bird sanctuary. The idea appeals to Hanby and he makes the promise. The Hanbys take possession of the Gray house.

CHAPTER V—Continued

—9—

"Bill," she said, "you must be fond of the Hanby clan to do this. Poor old Bill!" she murmured softly.

"Why poor?" he demanded.

"I know," she said wisely. "You can't fool me."

"I'm not poor," he retorted. "I'm rich. I have a family without the labor of supporting it. I'm much more sensible than you imagine. I adore your mother. She married the man she loved. Three things might have happened to me—I might have married another woman, and made her unhappy; I might have become one of those sour, cynical old devils who poison this earth; I might have drunk myself to death. I thought of doing all three at various times. I did try drinking for a year, but Dina made me feel like a d-d coward. I am now going to use some of your modern terms. I sublimated my love into affection for everything that was dear to your mother. That's why I bear your superior airs with cheerfulness. That's why I talk baseball scores with Tim."

"You love baseball," said Celia.

"I love you," retorted Pelham.

"About four years ago—the summer we had a house at Allenhurst—I cherished a hopeless passion for you," Celia confided. "It began when you used to do those fancy back dives at the Allenhurst pool, and was fanned to fury when you rescued that man from the surf. Did you ever suspect it?"

"Not a bit," he said. "Mine is an open, modest nature, shrinking and simple. You interest me strangely. Celia. Why did you drop me?"

"I went back to school," she said, "and there was an adorable being who taught us music. I wanted to practice Beethoven ten hours a day."

"Why did you drop him?"

"He was sent away for kissing a teacher—or, rather, for being caught kissing a teacher. After that Les rather amused me. I was then an emotionally old woman of seventeen."

"Are you really fond of Les?" asked Pelham.

"I wish I knew!"

"I thought one always knew."

"Not in these times," said Celia. "One meets so many boys. Les is on probation this summer. What about a swim before breakfast? There's a gorgeous high dive into twenty feet of water. I want to beat Junior at back diving. Please, Bill, give me a lesson!"

"You'll have to make it right with Dina," he said. "I'm hoe man in chief, and I want to keep my job."

"Dina and dad will be there before you, if you don't make haste."

"What? Taking advantage of me like that? I'll be in my bathing suit before you are!"

The two raced toward the house.

The swimming party was not ready for breakfast until half past nine. The meal was hardly begun when a package of mail was brought in.

"I'm going to send a postboy on horseback for it, when things are in running order," Hanby commented, sorting it out. "Tradesmen's invitations, mainly. Here's one from a Poughkeepsie undertaker, with most attractive illustrations of the latest in caskets."

Next he held up a large square envelope, lavender-colored, and adorned with a black coat of arms.

"Budleigh Salterton," he read. "I didn't tell you, Dina, that I wrote to Mr. Seymour weeks ago, asking if he had a chauffeur like the one Smucker described." Hanby frowned a little. "It's odd that his reply should come on our first breakfast here!"

"What does he say?" Dina asked.

Hanby slit the envelope.

"In the center is a crest," he commented. "Underneath is a simple

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

— By —

Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service

Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

English address. Listen! 'Seymour Manor, Bovey-Tracey, Ottery St. Mary, Budleigh Salterton, Devonshire.' That makes the Gray house fade into nothing! On the top left hand corner it says, 'Telegraph, Otterton.' On the top right-hand corner it says, 'Great Western station, four miles.'

This was the missive that Hanby read aloud:

"HILTON HANBY, ESQ.,

"My Dear Sir:

"Owing to a fishing trip in Norway my answer to your letter has been unavoidably delayed.

"During my stay in your country my chauffeur was the one now in my service, Richard Betterton. He is five feet nine in height, weighs one hundred and forty pounds, is dark, pale of face, with an aquiline nose—in fact, as you see, in every respect differing from the impostor who claimed to have held this position.

"I am, my dear sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"STANFORD SEYMOUR."

"I resign as hoe man," Bill Pelham said. "I am now the house detective. I report for work here and



"If He's a Salesman," Hanby Reflected, "I'm Gone."

now. I guessed wrong about the big-hearted chauffeur who blew Smucker to a feed!"

Hanby was worried. He had almost banished the affair from his mind. Now everything came back to him vividly, particularly the woman who threatened him with death.

"Well, we're dug in here now," he observed, "and it will take something more than vague threats to turn us out."

CHAPTER VI

There was a letter for Mrs. Hanby in the package of mail.

"Who's been writing to you, Dina?" her husband inquired.

"The Parkers. They've been wanting to come here, but I told them we weren't asking any one till we had got used to the place. It would spoil it to have any outsiders yet. I shall be finding new wonders every minute for a month. Besides, we have no saddle horses yet, and Julia is mad about riding. That reminds me that I must order a habit and a side saddle."

Hanby was still thinking of the mysterious warnings.

"It's funny," he remarked presently, "that any one should take the trouble to feed Smucker for nothing. There must be something behind it."

"Junior and I will find out," said Bill. "It's beneath the dignity of the lord of the manor to sleuth."

"The first letter I opened," continued Hanby, pursuing his train of thought, "was from an undertaker noted for the simplicity and dignity of his funerals. He includes flowers. That's thoughtful! The next was from Seymour. Perhaps I shall now be called to the telephone to talk with another unknown conversationalist."

"My motto is eternal vigilance," said Pelham. "Carry on your business as usual—your faithful hawk-

shaw slumbers not nor sleeps. I'll tell you what I will do, Hil," he suggested briskly. "I'll beat you three sets out of four whenever you are ready. I've been reading a book on tennis tactics, and after committing it to memory I've burned it, so you can't read it. You haven't a chance!"

Hanby's mood was more cheerful. "I wrote that book," he declared. "Want to bet?"

"Go and get into flannels," Pelham told him. "Hil's worried," he added to Dina, when Hanby had left the room.

"I never saw him so before. Try and make him laugh at it, Bill."

Hanby's mood of depression passed very quickly. New daily interests so crowded one upon the other that there was no room for gloom or introspection.

The Parkers did not come. Parker's stomach, after many unheeded warnings, had finally rebelled against its owner's habit of taking three meat meals a day. Julia Parker wrote that her husband was about to be operated upon.

One day, walking down the drive, Hanby met a small, florid, neatly dressed man approaching the house—the sort of man to inspire confidence even among the most suspicious.

"If he's a salesman," Hanby reflected, "I'm gone. A man like that could sell me anything!"

The stranger bowed politely.

"Mr. Hanby, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Hanby, wondering what it was he was about to buy.

"My name is Appleton—Frederick Appleton. You are probably unaware of my existence."

"On the contrary, you are expected when the bass season opens. You were kind enough to give my friend Mr. Pelham some information about this house."

"As I was in the neighborhood, I took the liberty of coming to see your improvements. I have always been much interested in the Gray house."

"I shall be glad to show you over it and ask your advice. I find every day that there are a lot of things about country estates that they don't teach boys on farms—these improvements, for instance."

Mr. Appleton's manner was almost eager.

"May I ask what they are?"

"A big swimming pool between the tennis courts and the house, a new garage for six cars, a Japanese tea house, and a dozen smaller jobs."

Nothing pleases the new owner more than the opportunity to exhibit his property. Mr. Appleton was bored by nothing. He begged to be shown everything. He had no criticisms. He congratulated Hilton Hanby warmly.

"You will make this," he declared "one of the stately homes of America. You have a genius for this sort of thing."

Only in one matter was his view opposed to that of the owner. He thought that the ground given over to the bird sanctuary would do admirably for ornamental glass houses.

"My wife and I wouldn't think of such a thing," Hanby asserted firmly. "We are for the conservation of bird life. You may not know it, but our rarer species of songsters are in serious danger of extermination. That bird sanctuary is a hobby of ours, and it will not be disturbed while we live."

Mr. Appleton wrung his host's hand. Hanby was surprised at the emotion written on this cheery, unlined face.

"It does you credit, sir," he exclaimed. "In my ignorance I have given no thought to such matters. It was criminal negligence. I did not know."

"As a matter of fact," Hanby confessed, "I was just as heedless as you until a month ago. Mr. Bayliss, whom I met at the Metropolitan club, told me all about it. I rather think he is president of the Ornithological society."

"The name seems familiar," said Appleton. "One of our national authorities, if I mistake not. I think I have read a notice of one of his books on the subject."

Appleton was sightseeing until luncheon. Hanby would not let him refuse to stay to the meal, despite the fact that he had a neat package of sandwiches and fruit.

The interior of the house charmed him greatly. He was filled with admiration at the rules of the Sanctuary club. The critical family circle approved of him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid



The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion by Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains, Miss Selenos, a former tenant, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Hanby considers asking Leslie Barron, long an admirer of Celia, to join the house party. Mrs. Hanby declares she likes the house. Pelham becomes a member of the household. Leslie Barron arrives making four able-bodied members of the Hanby household. A phone call from a man who declares he is an old acquaintance of Hanby's and interested in ornithology, but whom Hanby cannot identify, urges him to preserve a part of the grounds as a bird sanctuary. The idea appeals to Hanby and he makes the promise. The Hanbys take possession of the Gray house. A stranger introducing himself as Frederick Appleton, calls at the Gray house and is welcomed because of his interest in bird life.

CHAPTER VI—Continued —10—

After luncheon Hanby admitted that the workmen were not accomplishing what the contractor had promised.

"Since you bring up the subject," said Mr. Appleton, "may I point out the probable causes?"

He spoke with much assurance on work and workmen, on the cost of material, and on the manner in which grafting foremen could deceive even the intelligent but amateur scrutiny of a man like Mr. Hanby.

"I wish you were out of a position," Mr. Hanby said, when Appleton finished.

"May I ask why?"

"I'd ask you to be my agent here. Besides these improvements, I have three tenant farmers who want repairs for barns and houses, and I'm bound to say they seem most unreasonable. I came here to play, not to work."

Appleton smiled. He had the look of one who delights to bring good news.

"Things generally turn out for the best," he observed. "I left the employ of Douglas & Smith last week. Strictly speaking, I could not afford to do so; but, after almost thirty-five years, to have to take orders from one with not one-third of that service was too bitter. I am not a proud man. Mr. Hanby, but I resigned. This is a business trip. Mr. Clarke, of Amenla, is considering alterations, and I hoped he might select me to supervise them."

"It's Clarke's loss," said Hanby. "I need you more than he does."

Mrs. Hanby was very glad at the news.

"Where will you stay?" she asked. "There is no accommodation near."

"Perhaps you have a room over the garages," he suggested timidly. "I am accustomed to look after myself."

"All the rooms are occupied. Why not stay with us until something suitable turns up? This is an enormous house, as you know."

Appleton was made specially welcome because his coming exempted each member of the household from some unaccustomed and unwelcome task. Junior had been deputed to see that the workmen finished the swimming pool on time. Celia's arithmetic was strained at estimating the cost of lumber. These labors Mr. Appleton took over.

The Hanbys liked him for his simplicity. He told them about his wife whom he adored—an invalid lady unable to leave New York because of some special treatment for rheumatism that she was taking.

The foreman of masons resigned directly he found a man over him whom he could not fool. Appleton's mild appearance deceived him. It was one of his grounds of grievance when he sought an interview with Mr. Hanby.

"You say Mr. Appleton swore at you 'something terrible'?" Hanby scoffed. "Don't lie about it! Mr. Appleton couldn't do a thing like that but I'm liable to turn rough any time an inefficient loafer tries to put up a fool story like that. Get out!"

"Had the audacity," Hanby told his wife, "to say that old Appleton called him foul names."

They laughed together at the absurdity of it.

"I lost my temper, I admit," confessed Appleton, at lunch. "I explained that labor owed something to the capital without which it could not exist."

"You talked over his head," Hanby said. "I thought that must be it."

The old man bothered them very little. He did not intrude. It was his nightly habit to walk about the grounds, puffing at the single cigar he allowed himself, and then to retire. He insisted on making his own bed and keeping his room in order. The servants, after the untidy ways of Junior and Les, found him no trouble at all.

"He saves me twice his salary every week," Hanby declared, "and he allows me to be a gentleman of leisure again."

"Appleton is all right," said Junior thinking of the overseer's job that had been his. "We all love him except Les."

"What have you against him?" Bill Pelham demanded. "Report all suspicious things to the house detective."

Les did not welcome the looks that were cast upon him.

"Nothing," he admitted. "I can't like every one, can I?"

"Les," demanded Celia, "tell me at once—what is it?"

"He reminds me of my Uncle Russell, if you must know. He has the same highly polished face. I don't like my uncle, and it's the association of ideas, I suppose."

"Les," Celia said severely, "I don't believe that's the real reason."

There was no doubt about Leslie's smile. He was a singularly good-looking lad when he smiled, with small, white, even teeth, and a mouth cut almost too well for a man.

"That's all you are going to get from me," he said.

"Leave it to the house detective," Pelham interrupted. "I'll give Les the third degree and report to you tomorrow."

"Les is full of prejudices," Celia answered. "Don't worry, Bill. He has a young and uninteresting soul. I like men of your age." She turned to her mother. "I confessed to Bill my hopeless passion for him at Alenhurst, but he wasn't even flattered."

"You were only fourteen. Try him now."

"Darling Bill," said Celia seductively, "I love you, and I shall have a hundred thousand dollars on my wedding day. Will you marry me just to spite Les?"

"If he'll be my best man. Will you, Les?"

"I'll be d—d first!" cried Les hotly.

"You see he's really fond of me," Celia announced. "Look at the fire in his eyes and the passion in his voice. If ever I marry him, he'll beat me."

"Sometimes I'd like to," Les admitted.

"Mr. Appleton," said Celia, "is a charming old gentleman with manners that Les would do well to copy."

"Charming?" Les cried. "Can any one show me how to gnash my teeth?"

"Hush!" warned Hanby. "Here he is."

Luncheon was the only meal at which he appeared.

"Afraid you were not coming," Hanby said cordially.

"I have just paid off the workmen on the swimming pool," he said. "The Japanese tea house on the tennis lawn will be done tomorrow."

"You certainly make them work," said Hanby. "I wonder how you do it!"

"I reward the efficient and discharge those who shirk their duty. It was my system all the years I was in the employ of Douglas & Smith."

"Mr. Appleton!" Celia called. The old man turned his smiling face to

her. "I've made a very important discovery about the bird sanctuary."

"What?" he said, so quickly that they could see the news disturbed him.

"I was wandering past it last night after dinner."

"Unwise," said Appleton. "Mosquitoes. Be advised to keep away. So you made a discovery?"

"Yes—I saw a great black snake at least seven feet long."

"Is that all? My dear Miss Celia, you saw one of the most valuable of the ophidians. The black snake is a rat eater, a mouse hunter, worth his weight in gold to your honored parents in the protection of the song birds. Rats are the natural enemies of the birds. The black snakes are the natural enemies of rats." Instinct guided Mr. Appleton's eyes to Tim, who was at that moment meditating a snake hunt. "Tim will be wise not to kill any but venomous snakes, such as the copperhead."

"Tim is not going near the bird sanctuary," his mother declared.

After luncheon Appleton sought out Mr. Hanby.

"By the end of the week I shall have completed all the alterations," he said. "I have seen to the farm repairs, and have reduced your account keeping to a card index system well within the comprehension of your son."

"That doesn't mean you are leaving us, I hope?"

"Alas, yes. My poor wife has had a turn for the worse, and my duty is at her side. Darby and Joan, you know, Mr. Hanby—Darby and Joan!"

"I shall have to get some one to take your place."

"That should not be necessary," said Mr. Appleton. "Oh, dear me, no! You will have no more trouble with workmen."

"I'll see Douglas about it," said Hanby. "I'm going into town in a few days."

"I doubt if Mr. Douglas knows of any one. Everything in that line was left to me. In his desire to be courteous to you he might recommend some wholly unsuitable person."

Hanby sensed the dislike the former employee felt for the man who had failed to appreciate him, but this did not sway the new owner in the least. Nor did Appleton's offer to send a man meet with approval. Douglas was one of the biggest men of his calling in New York, and Hanby maintained that he would not recommend any but an expert.

When Appleton had gone, Bill Pelham asked Leslie a question.

"What was your grievance against that cheerful rotundity?"

"I didn't like the way he looked at Celia."

"My dear Les!" Bill protested.

"That's all right," returned Les, "but you didn't know my Uncle Russell."

"I've read enough about him in the papers."

"About his financial triumphs. I don't mean that. He was as wicked an old beast as ever lived—a calculating, smiling, respect-inspiring old libertine, and he smiled in the fatherly way that your old Applejack has. Now go and laugh and tell the others. Celia will think it a scream."

"I'll keep it to myself," said Bill; "but you won't mind if I don't agree with you?"

Poor jealous boy, he meditated, so unhappy at Celia's exasperating way that he seized on the old-world courtesies of Appleton as offensive!

"Les," he said presently, "you'll have to get over those things."

"There are some things no decent man ever gets over," Les replied warmly.

"Hist!" warned Bill. "Who comes?"

A stranger stepped out of a station taxi, walked over the terrace, and rang the bell.

"Who's that?" Les demanded.

"Except that she is a professional woman forty-three years of age, height five feet five, weight one hundred and fifty, has two gold stoppings in the lower bicuspids, has never been married, is fond of hiking, and devoted to classical music, I can tell you nothing. But for those details she is a complete stranger upon whom I have never before set eyes."

"Bill, you're a marvel," said Les.

"I dare not contradict you. I am. It all comes out of a correspondence course on how to be a house detective."

"How can I check up on the teeth?" Les asked.

"You can't. That wouldn't be playing the game. It would be rude of you to ask the lady to open her mouth. Take my word for it."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

*The Mystery of a
Haunted Mansion*

by Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Hanby considers asking Leslie Barron, long an admirer of Celia, to join the house party. Mrs. Hanby declares she likes the house. Pelham becomes a member of the household. Leslie Barron arrives making four able-bodied members of the Hanby household. A phone call from a man who declares he is an old acquaintance of Hanby's and interested in ornithology, but whom Hanby cannot identify, urges him to preserve a part of the grounds as a bird sanctuary. The idea appeals to Hanby and he makes the promise. The Hanbys take possession of the Gray house. A stranger introducing himself as Frederick Appleton, calls at the Gray house and is welcomed because of his interest in bird life. Hanby foresees trouble in connection with work to be done on the estate with which he is unfamiliar, and gladly engages Appleton as his agent.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

—11—

"Bill," said Les presently, "you give me the idea of being constantly on the watch."

"What do I get five and a quarter a day for?"

"Seriously, Bill, what makes you look as if you thought there was something menacing around?"

"Do I give myself away to that extent? How artless of me! I thought I was just registering firm determination."

"I've seen you stalking around at night. Why? Let me in on it. You know I'm not likely to spill it. Bill, as man to man, what makes you look so darned anxious?"

Bill Pelham lowered his voice.

"As man to man, Les, there is danger. I have made some very remarkable discoveries. You mustn't tell even Junior, because Dina has some psychic way of knowing when her children are worried, and this is not a matter for joking. Here's Junior now."

"Hi, Bill!" Junior shouted, coming toward them. "There's a lawyer lady all the way from New York. Dad wants you to come."

Bill Pelham looked at Les with triumph.

"You see that every one of my statements has been verified. I stated distinctly that she had come from New York to see me. Her shoes were bought at the one city in America where they are sold. Her gloves could only have come from Mustrell's, on the Avenue. I recognized the crumb of cake on her second chin as made only by Mary Elizabeth's New York branch."

The house detective made his way to the big hall. The brisk professional woman was introduced as Doctor Byers.

"I hold degrees in medicine and law," she said. "I really can't say whether I'm here today as a lawyer or as a psychopath."

"Bill," said Hanby, "the great Selenos mystery is about to be cleared up."

"I can hardly agree that it is a mystery," objected the visitor.

"At all events I'm glad you came, and not your vengeful client. She is a dynamo of unpleasant energy."

"How little you know her!" Doctor Byers commented. "If one may regard her as a dynamo, she is the kind of dynamo which uses all its force for a few moments and then has long periods of inertia, during which current is being generated for some future use. I am not sure that my knowledge of dynamos is sound, but you no doubt get my meaning. After her interview with you my client was prostrated for a month. She is intensely nervous now—too nervous, in fact, even to come here."

"I'm bound to say she made a very poor impression on me," Hanby said.

"It is her unfortunate way. She suffers intensely from delusions of persecution. She particularly loathes and despises men—unjustly I believe."

"What is her interest in this house from which she was evicted for non payment of rent?"

"That's the very thing I've come about, Mr. Hanby. You don't mind if I smoke a cigarette, do you? Thanks! I must ask you to be patient for a few moments. It is a truism to say that everything is relative, isn't it? Very well, then. If you, or I, or Miss Selenos, believe in our hearts that some one thing or another, apparently insignificant in itself, is the most vital thing in our lives, that thing is actually the most important. This is modern teaching. The trouble is that we judge the interests of others by our own standards." She turned to Bill Pelham. "Jazz music, to you, may be the most important thing since Tubal Cain's time. I despise it. To me a fine symphony orchestra represents music at its apotheosis."

"I knew it," declared Bill, gratified. "I said so."

"I don't think you quite understand," said Doctor Byers, a little puzzled.

"I think we do," remarked Hanby. "What you mean is that the thing motivating your client will seem very insignificant to us. What is her interest in my house, and why did she



"Undoubtedly the Poor Creature is Mad," Said Hanby.

desire me not to live here? I should like to know how my family can desecrate it. I think that was the word she used."

"All she wants to do," said Doctor Byers, "is to be allowed to remove something she buried here. She has had great trouble. It seems that Douglas & Smith referred her to a Mr. Appleton, who had complete charge of houses and properties listed in this county."

"A most conscientious man," Hanby said warmly. "I know him well."

"Perhaps too conscientious. My client, having vivid dislikes, immediately declared him to be a libertine scoundrel and thief."

"Your client," asserted Hanby, "should be in the county asylum for the insane."

"I disagree. She is neither dangerous nor likely to become a charge on the community. She believes that Appleton arranged the eviction in order to spite her. Certainly it need not have been so drastic. She did not refuse to pay the rent because she was without means. She refused because certain alterations were not carried out. These alterations were not embodied in the contract that Appleton drew up. Legally she had no case. She is sure that Appleton deliberately tricked her. She was so upset that she went to Algiciras to live. When she came back, she made another effort to rent the place through Douglas & Smith. They referred her to Appleton again, and he refused."

"Why?" Pelham asked. "It stood empty long enough."

"Appleton would not recommend her to old Miss Coryell, who owned it, as a suitable client. Miss Coryell believed in him implicitly. It seems amazing that Mr. Douglas can place such reliance on him."

"Not amazing to those who know him," Hanby retorted, unable to see why Frederick Appleton should be criticized thus.

"My client appealed to successive tenants to allow her to remove what she had buried, but again the Appleton influence intervened. One ten-

ant, a Mr. Seymour, seemed likely to be agreeable, but Appleton stopped that. He informed Mr. Seymour that a tenant has no legal right to allow any excavation without the consent of the owner, Miss Coryell. Like most Englishmen, Mr. Seymour was afraid of offending against any such statutes as hedge about landowners, and had to refuse. He laid the blame squarely on Appleton. My client, having no legal adviser at the time, behaved with great unwisdom. She hired men to go there by night and Appleton bobbed up in time to prevent them from entering. I regret to say that Miss Selenos made a regrettable scene."

"I am bound to say I am now drawn to her," Hanby remarked. "I had a very unpleasant interview with her. What has she buried? Why did she bury it?"

"Mr. Hanby," Doctor Byers said in her pleasant voice, "forget for a minute that she offended you. Consider her as a lonely old woman grievously deceived by a man forty years ago. Is she the first to become embittered? Is she the first to turn to what we call the lower animals?"

"You mean those dogs?"

"I mean those dogs. The dog is the only animal that has ever made an alliance with man, the only animal that will brave death for its owner, the only really unselfish thing in the world." Doctor Byers looked about her. "You have everything—one of the loveliest women in America for a wife, beautiful children, riches, and this home. My client has nothing but her love for dogs. The second shock of her life was when four of her dogs were poisoned here. I suppose, if I tell you she believed that Appleton did it, you will smile."

"Undoubtedly the poor creature is mad," said Hanby.

His voice was not so vindictive now. It was true, he thought, that he had everything—health, happiness, freedom from monetary care, a friend like Bill Pelham. Insensibly his mood softened.

"She had leaden caskets made and buried them out on a little lawn where a sundial stood. It shocked her immeasurably to learn that Mr. Seymour had removed the dial and made a tennis lawn. She is now in a position to pay for any damages. I may say I am here to make you an offer for this house considerably in excess of what you paid for it."

"It is not in the market," replied Hanby.

"Then will you let her have the little lead coffins removed?"

Hanby smiled a little.

"I suppose you know that my family, who are devoted to that grass court, will be singularly pleased."

"She is prepared to pay."

"No money will buy a ready-made grass tennis court," he reminded her. "Is that a refusal?"

"Does it mean so much to that old woman?"

"It means so much that you would not believe it."

"All right!" Hanby said, sighing. "Go ahead!"

But the lawn was not wrecked. With a sharp steel probe, the house detective discovered the leaden boxes. They were immediately under the net. The removal was skillfully done. Even Junior did not know it had taken place.

"Now that it is all over," said Doctor Byers, "I am commissioned to ask Mrs. Hanby if she will accept this emerald."

Hanby could see that the stone set in a pendant, was of great value.

"We couldn't think of it," he declared.

"Why not? My client, now that her California property is clear, is certainly worth \$5,000,000. She is a very remarkable woman. Please notice that she did not offer this as a bribe. If you do not take it, her directions are explicit. I am to throw it into the lake."

"Oh, Hil!" said Dina, later. "This is another of the things I've always wanted. It's the most gorgeous stone I've ever seen!"

"You never told me so," he replied, almost jealously.

"It would have made you unhappy to know there was something you could not give me."

"So that's the Selenos mystery!" he said, meditating. "Poor old soul! She couldn't bear the idea of young barbarians at play on her burying ground. Well, if she's happier now, I'm glad, but as a mystery it has fivvered badly."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Pelham becomes a member of the household. A phone call from a man who declares he is an old acquaintance of Hanby's, urges him to preserve a part of the grounds as a bird sanctuary. The Hanbys take possession of the Gray house. A stranger introducing himself as Frederick Appleton, calls at the Gray house and is welcomed because of his interest in bird life. Hanby engages Appleton as his agent. The Selenos mystery is explained.

CHAPTER VII

—12—

Consider for a moment the case of the unfortunate Adolf Smucker, bereft of a job and soured by the difficulty of finding another. Until he was discharged he had not known that his status among his neighbors was wholly due to their mistaken estimate of the importance of his position in the office of Hilton Hanby, of Leonard street, woolen merchant. The only jobs open to him were of a sort that would have lowered him in the eyes of his friends, his family, and the young men paying court to his daughters.

Nor was this all. Like many another careful man, he had deeded his property to his wife, to find, too late, that such a beneficiary regards the gift as entirely her own. He was to learn that Mrs. Smucker had long known of his inefficiencies as a provider. After that fateful sentence, "Dolf, you've fired yourself," she knew that the task of looking after things was hers. She had long wondered at Mr. Hanby's unusual forbearance.

Smucker was conscious that he had fallen from the domestic pedestal. He saw that he was no longer of prime importance. His meals were now no better than those given these many years to his old father; and the old man dared to jeer at him, to question his interpretation of political events, and to denounce him as a Bolshevik!

The wild look in Smucker's eye became wilder. He was no longer compelled to shave every day. Mrs. Smucker and the girls pressed his pants no more. He frequented more intensely those little clubs of malcontents whose members spoke behind locked doors of the time coming when the land would be as red as ever Russia was red. They did not especially welcome Smucker, since they were mainly of foreign birth and speech; but the chief organizers, who knew men, marked him down as one who could be worked upon if needed.

There must always be some first man to hurl a bomb or throw phosphorus cakes among ripening crops. The best were those like Smucker, who had nursed grievances against richer and more capable men until hatred flamed up at a word of encouragement, and who had no exact knowledge of the details of the movement, or of the names of the active conspirators. Smucker came to depend upon these haters of rule, these enemies to society, for the cheap cigarettes he smoked. He posed as an honest man whom capital had thrown broken, into life's gutter. They affected to believe him. He was a tool to be used at need.

One day the Smuckers, in family council, decided that Adolph should ask Mr. Hanby for some such letter of recommendation as might enable him to get a clerical position in one of the Weehawken factories. His trousers were pressed, and his shoes shined, and he turned cityward. He did not like the prospect at all, but the Smuckers in council had a massed psychology which overrode all objections.

His family was against him. Those who had listened to him respectfully now turned and jeered. People passing him wondered why he talked to himself so constantly. They could not guess that he was again experiencing vengeful visions of what he would do when he got into power. In these dreams he now included even his old father, who made ten dollar a week, his taunting children, and the two young men who despised him as a future father-in-law.

By this time Hilton Hanby occupied a more prominent position than ever in these schemes of punishment. Hanby was the prime cause of it all. Hanby was capital incarnate. Well the Communists were coming soon!

Smucker demanded to see Mr. Hanby.

The office boy, who had suffered much in the past at Smucker's hands, licked his lip when he saw his enemy.

"He's out of town," said the boy, "and he wouldn't see you if he was here."

"I'll wait," said Smucker loftily.

"We have no sleeping accommodations," said the boy. "He won't be back for weeks, and you'd be in the way."

"You were always a liar," said Smucker.

"And you were always a thief," shouted the other. "I've got your number! I've seen you pinching stamps, and I got the blame for it!"

"You are the serf of a capitalist," said Smucker. "You are lickspittle of the forces that hold us down. We shall have uses for your kind when the day comes!"

"You are a d—d anarchist!" cried the boy.

Here he was interrupted by the office manager, who looked over his glasses at Smucker and frowned. He listened to Smucker's request for a recommendation.

"Not with my consent," he announced. "Don't make a scene," he added sharply. "You were lazy and

very strong. He ducked, broke the hold, and disappeared into the crowd.

It all happened as the officer had expected, and he went about his duty; but the episode made an enormous difference in Adolf Smucker. He was now a hunted man. The police wanted him. He was escaping from the tyranny of capital. His home would already be marked. He was an outcast.

He dived into the subway station at City hall. An hour later he was sitting on a bench near Grant's tomb. A woman with a baby carriage moved hurriedly away when he suddenly burst into merriment. Smucker had forgotten all about his father's little hoard of savings—thirty dollars—which he had taken as the old man lay asleep after his night's work at the docks.

A train noisily puffing along on the river bank gave him a new idea. He would find Hanby, and would punish him as the author of all his misfortunes. Cordons of police were probably waiting for him at the ferries, but they would not be watching the railroad stations yet. He remembered that Pine Plains was the station, and that it was served by the Newburgh, Dutchess and Columbia railroad.

It was dark when Smucker skulked along the road from Pine Plains to the Gray house. It was a long, weary walk, and Smucker usually tired easily, but tonight he walked on air. He talked aloud. He denounced his enemies and exulted in their doom.

Reason and madness were fighting for the possession of his mind. Perhaps Smucker had never been wholly sane. It needed some such precipitating cause as this to give the battle to the darker forces. When big motor cars passed him, he spat at them.

It was almost ten when he reached Hanby's estate. Sheltering behind a great elm, he saw two people cantering toward him. The bright moonlight revealed Hilton Hanby and his wife. Mrs. Hanby wore a light linen habit.

The menace of gallopers! One of Smucker's orator friends had described how he had been ridden down by the czar's Cossacks. Hanby and his wife had nearly ridden Smucker down.

Then the intruder came upon the swimming pool by the house. He recognized the Hanby children and Pelham. The big noisy man was Brophy, the banker. There were half a dozen others, laughing, diving. Other civilizations had wanted thus on the eve of disaster, Smucker gloated.

The sound of music led him nearer the brightly lighted mansion. He peered through a rear window, and saw that here even the servants revealed. He scowled as he recognized the impudent girl who had let him into the duplex apartment. She was dancing with a manservant. So the Hanbys had funkies to wait on them now!

Smucker had not determined on his manner of revenge. He realized that he must employ cunning, not force. He was a lone man among many. He cursed himself for not buying a revolver. He had not even a knife. He withdrew from the house, and sank into the shadows. He would lie down somewhere and plan what to do.

A sound as of the clicking of a rifle trigger made him turn his frightened head. He realized in that moment that he had forgotten the possibility of police pursuit. Now he was conscious of its imminence.

On a little mound fifty feet distant, his body silhouetted against the bright moonlight, stood a man, with a rifle resting in the crook of his left elbow. So on a hundred rolls of film had Smucker seen warders and jailers stand, waiting to kill escaping prisoners. As he looked, the unknown raised his rifle. It seemed to the terrified man that it was pointed directly at him.

With a screech hardly human, Smucker dived into the nearest shadows and began a race for life. He heeded not where he went, so long as he could seek darkness and escape from the white and mocking moonlight. That he was approaching the house he did not notice until the lighted windows brought him to a stop.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



With a Screech Hardly Human, Smucker Dived Into the Nearest Shadows and Began a Race for Life

insubordinate, and you padded our expenses. I'll put that in the letter, if it helps you. You are taking up office time. Get out!"

"Never!" said Smucker, snarling. "I'll wait till Hanby comes."

The office boy opened the door in the railings and took Smucker by the shoulder. He was a strong boy, and he ached to use his muscles on the man he detested.

In the corridor, outside, Smucker fell. His head struck a gleaming cuspidor placed conveniently by the elevator to tempt the promiscuous expectorator. Here he lay, screaming imprecations. Here, he declared, he would wait until a policeman came to see how he had been assaulted.

The office boy, feeling a little scared, withdrew. Olsen, the elevator man, implored in vain. A nervous tenant telephoned for the police.

All might have been well for Smucker, and he might have won his proposed suit for damages had not he made the mistake of denouncing the officer as foully as his political associates denounced those in charge of the nation's destiny.

"I'm a bloated timeserver wearing the livery of official degradation, am I?" snapped the policeman. His strong hand fastened itself about Smucker's neck and hauled him to his feet. "There's a day coming soon when my fat throat will be cut, is there? Come and tell that to the sergeant at the desk!"

The policeman knew Smucker's sort. He had no intention of taking him anywhere but out into the street. There were many such half-crazed men in Manhattan. He would throw a scare into the fellow—and he did.

Smucker now saw that escape was his main object in life. He observed, too, that the policeman's grip was not

What the Gray House Hid

THE STORY

Hilton Hanby has purchased a country place—the Gray house, near Pine Plains. Miss Selenos, a former tenant, warns him that the house is under a curse. Further alarming details are impressed upon Adolf Smucker, Hanby's secretary, by a man who claims to have been chauffeur for Sir Stanford Seymour, former occupant of the place. The Hanbys laugh off the warnings. But they are shocked when they hear that the caretaker of the Gray house, a man named Kerr, has been mysteriously murdered. Hanby consults his friend Pelham. The family starts for the new home. Appleton, a clerk of Douglas and Smith, the agents from whom Hanby bought the Gray house, urges Pelham to dissuade Hanby from occupying the Gray house. Pelham becomes a member of the household. A phone call from a man who declares he is an old acquaintance of Hanby's, urges him to preserve a part of the grounds as a bird sanctuary. The Hanbys take possession of the Gray house. A stranger introducing himself as Frederick Appleton, calls at the Gray house and is welcomed because of his interest in bird life. Hanby engages Appleton as his agent. The Selenos mystery is explained. Smucker, out of a job after the loss of his position with Hanby, becomes embittered against him as the author of his misfortunes, and plans revenge.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

—13—

He turned away and made for the bird sanctuary. The wire netting about it he climbed nimbly, and then unheeding thorns and brambles, he crept like the hunted thing he was to its black center. Suddenly he stepped into nothingness. He felt himself falling. Then came a blow, and he was no more aware of time and space.

When Tim Hanby, intent on adding a white owl to his collection, had carefully aimed his twenty-two at the creature as it sat on an elm branch, he had not been prepared for the extraordinary intervention that saved its life. As his finger caressed the trigger, there came a bloodcurdling scream, and some large animal had sprung from the base of the tree. Tim felt that it was no disgrace to flee immediately.

Hanby had not been near his office for two months. An hour's dictation cleared up his correspondence, and he went to the Hardware club for luncheon.

"Hello, Douglas!" he said, stopping at the table where an elderly, gray-haired man was sitting. "I called you up this morning, but you were busy."

"Glad to see you," Douglas replied heartily; "I've missed you. What's it like to be a landed proprietor?"

"The best life in the world," Hanby declared! "but a darned sight more to do than I thought. Why did you recommend me to buy those farms?"

"A sound investment. They'll be wanted for a country club some day. How are your improvements coming along?"

"They are finished, thanks to your admirable Appleton. Douglas, how could you let a jewel of a man like that go?"

There was a curious smile on the heavily lined face of the real estate man.

"So Appleton has been up there again, has he?" inquired Douglas.

"Again? What do you mean?"

"The Gray house holds some singular fascination for him—that's what I mean. You ask why I let him go. You call him a jewel. I did that for more than thirty years."

"And yet you refused to raise his pay, and stuck some jackanapes over him. I thought you were a better business man than that."

"Tell me just what he said," Douglas returned.

He listened to Hanby in silence.

"Now hear me," he resumed. "I fired Appleton. I didn't refuse to raise his pay, and I put nobody over him."

"You fired Appleton? Douglas, you must have been crazy! What for?"

"Obviously because he was drunk and impertinent."

"Appleton? Why, he never drinks!"

"Another reason was because he had deliberately misled me as to his family life. Yet a third was because he had manipulated accounts. I don't mean that he took money from me. I mean that he had robbed Peter to pay Paul. I mean specifically that for years he had been charging other clients for the money he used to effect repairs on the Gray house."

"On my house?"

Douglas nodded.

"For years he has been interested in your house—for the last ten years, anyway. Another thing—Southard called me up a month or so ago, to ask why I allowed a man like you, with a lovely family, to buy a house where people died from bad drains. For the last few years Appleton has kept clients from buying that house. You ask why. I can't explain. Ask Appleton. I did, and was told to go to h—l."

"The Appleton I mean is a man of sixty, plump, smiling, and married to an invalid to whom he is devoted. He calls himself, Darby and his wife Joan."

"That's my Appleton, too. I took it upon myself to see her. There was another illusion gone. She is an invalid, but as to being devoted, he tells her openly he wishes she

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

— By —

Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service

Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

were dead, so that he could marry the younger woman he runs around with."

Hanby put his hands to his head. "This is too much!" he murmured. "Remember, I had him in my house for a month."

"I had him for more than thirty years. Up to the time he met this musical comedy person—she must be forty now—he was a good husband. Now he takes the woman out to dance halls. He has money saved, but he's spending it. I have never been so utterly deceived in any one. His wife, who is religious, thinks he's possessed of a devil, and maybe she's right. She says he has any amount of money. I had his books examined, and he hasn't embezzled one cent. All he has done is to divert money from other houses to the upkeep and repair of the one you're in. You've no kick coming. He saved you money. What was he doing for you?"

Hanby explained. He told Douglas what his improvements had been, their cost, and the time in which they were executed. The real-estate man made calculations on the back of a menu card. Fortunately Hanby had exact particulars as to dimensions.

"Here's another puzzle!" said Douglas. "To complete the work in that time he must have worked many more men than you paid for. I know prices and labor scales in New York state. It amounts to this—he went up to you to get the very job you pressed on him. Why? Search me. Hanby—search me! Another thing—he must have paid for extra workmen out of his own pocket, so that he could get the work done by a certain time. Again you may search me!"

Hanby frowned.

"He may have wanted the workmen off the premises for some purpose of his own."

"What purpose?" Douglas asked.

"How should I know? By the way did you ever deny permission to a former tenant, a Miss Selenos, to go back and dig something up from the garden?"

"I denied her right to do some excavation. Appleton told me she was a maniac who wanted to bomb the place. I turned it over to him. Anything in what he said?"

Hanby told him of the affair of Miss Selenos and her pets.

"I don't mind admitting that Appleton has destroyed a lot of my faith in mankind," Douglas said presently. "He was the one man I would have wagered my soul on as being square and white."

"Ever see the woman?"

"That was how it all came out. I ran out of gas near Mineola, and had to go to a very third-rate roadhouse. There was Appleton, in a neat tuxedo, doing fancy steps with a good looking ex-actress. I looked at him very hard. I couldn't believe it was he." Douglas laughed a little. "He had the d—d insolence to say that if I annoyed his lady friend by making baby eyes at her, he'd knock my block off. Next morning he didn't try to make excuses. He had a hang-over, and he told me much of what he had concealed since 1890 or thereabouts. It appeared that he had always hated me and envied me my good luck." Douglas grew almost irritable. "No more about Appleton, or I'll change my table!"

Hanby did not get back to the Gray house until late. He said a few words to the younger people and then asked Dina and Bill to come to the library.

"I've had a great day," he announced. "Incidentally I have discovered that my judgment of character is no better, let's say, than Bill's."

"And me a house detective!" Bill cried. "Your reason totters!"

"We've all been deceived but Les."

"Les?" cried Dina. "Oh, Hil, you're joking! That boy?"

"Dina, light of my life," said Hanby, "if there is a more thoroughgoing old hellion than Mr. Frederick Darby Pickwick Appleton, let me learn his dishonored name. I've seen his Joan this afternoon, and I know what I'm talking about. Listen! I'll begin with what Douglas told me and then come to my interview with that poor crippled old woman."

"It seems impossible!" commented Dina, at the end of her husband's narrative.

"I begin to suspect myself," Bill murmured. "Appleton!"

"It took me that way when I first heard it, but it cannot be doubted. He came here to get the opportunity to be in and near this house, and to see what was going on. He has always been coming and going. I've heard something that may bear on it a little. I got it from Mrs. Appleton. Her brother was a very rich man, but he speculated and died in poverty. There were a few years when it looked as if she was going to be his heiress; and Appleton was going to use the legacy to buy the Gray house and make it a fashionable roadhouse. He said there was a fortune in it. Fishing, golf, swimming—everything that was needed for a residential hotel. Perhaps 'roadhouse' isn't just what he meant, but that was Mrs. Appleton's term."

"But if her brother died in poverty, where would he get the money to buy this place?" Bill asked.

"I don't know. I admit that it doesn't solve the question why he should still be interested in it. There is no solution, as far as I see, and yet we know that something is going on here, or something is planned to go on, and that we stand in the way and they want to remove us. I wonder if we ought to consult the police!"

"And get all kinds of notoriety! Oh, Hil, don't think of it! Nothing has happened—not even a tramp."

"D—n it," said Hanby, "I'm a simple type. If I like people, I trust them absolutely. I go the limit for them, and they can have everything I've got. This gives me pause—whatever that means." He put his hand on his wife's arm. "Come and dance with me, Delilah, ere I challenge Bill to mortal combat!"

"Not a care in the world!" said Celia, a little later, watching her parents and talking intermittently to Les.

"Why should they have?" he answered. "Come to that, why should you have any cares?"

"Life bores me," the girl yawned.

"I talked like that in the beginning of my sophomore year. It used to make quite a hit. You've forgotten to ask what is life. I always did that."

"Les," she snapped, "I hate you! Your apperceptions are nebulous."

"That's a new one, I admit," he said. "I'll use it."

"To others girls?"

"Why not? If you won't have me, I must try my luck somewhere else."

"You have an attenuated soul substance, Les."

"Feed it with affection. It will expand."

"The main trouble with you is that you couldn't surprise me in any way. I know all your mental reactions. You never jump off the road. I could surprise you, Les, and I've a good mind to," Celia paused. "Perhaps I ought to tell you the whole romantic affair."

Leslie Barron looked at her, frowning. The word "romantic" spelled danger.

"Let the clutch in," he commanded.

"You are not the only man here," she said. "Last night, when you were playing pool with Bill, I went out to the swimming pool. It was midnight. I went out to pick some asphodel."

"What's that?"

"A romantic blossom to be found in most gardens of verse. Les, I met a most adorable, godlike man. He looked at me like a wild faun and then disappeared in a cloud of star dust."

There was something harder and more resolute about Leslie than Celia had ever seen before. She had an uneasy impression that there were depths in his nature as yet unplumbed by her; but she would not tell him so.

"Don't be rough," she said, and took her hand away from his. "Don't scowl at me so."

"Godlike strangers who disappear in star dust interest me," he said slowly. "I'd like to break his d—d neck!"

"But you couldn't," she answered. "He is much more splendid than you are."

"You admit talking to him?"

The young man's tone annoyed Celia.

"I admit nothing."

"I accuse you of talking to him," persisted Les, whose voice was husky.

"Of course, if you listened," she said airily, "why should I deny it?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

CHAPTER VII—Continued

—14—

"Why do you tease me?" he groaned.

"Because men like you are made to be teased."

"Celia, you didn't really see any one, did you?"

"I swear I did. What I said, if I said anything—which I don't admit—I shall keep to myself."

A moment later Celia left on Bill's arm.

"Quarrelling?" he asked.

"I see too much of him," she said.

"I think I shall fall in love with you again. Shall I?"

"My duties don't permit," he laughed. "You look tired. Why not go to bed early?"

"How quickly you tire of me!" she mocked. "I looked for something subtler from you. Les couldn't have done worse."

Bill Pelham smiled. Evidently she was fonder of Les than she had admitted. She looked at him dancing with her mother, but Les would not even smile.

"She's hurt him," said Bill to himself.

"I'll take your advice," Celia said yawning. "Night-o, Bill!"

She had hurt Leslie more than she guessed, and much more than she would have done if she had known how miserable he was.

"It has been lovely to be here all this time," Les said presently.

"Les, that doesn't mean that you are leaving us?"

"I'm afraid I'll have to."

"Is it something Celia has said?"

Leslie lied as calmly as he could.

"Not a thing! I've promised to run down to the Water Gap for a few days."

"You'll be back soon?"

Dina was distressed. She liked the boy, and hoped that Celia would marry him. Junior liked him. They all liked him, and yet Celia teased him almost to madness at times.

In his room Leslie composed a letter to Celia filled with that note of minor melancholy which drips from the pens of lovers with such exquisite ease. He told her he would be gone before she was up. He ended by saying, very darkly, that he had taken her advice and "jumped off the road."

Leslie smiled bitterly as he reread it. It sounded like a veiled threat of suicide.

All the others had gone to bed when he finished. He put the letter in his pocket, and went out to see if any wild faun was prowling about the Gray house grounds. Celia's encounter might have been fact or fancy. One could never be sure of Celia.

He gained the hall quietly, unbolted the door, and walked silently toward the abandoned swimming pool by the tennis courts.

"I'll be d—d!" said Leslie.

By the pool stood a very tall man—physically more splendid than young Barron, as Leslie himself would not have denied. The intruder heard no footfall on the grass. He was aware of another's presence only when Leslie tapped him on the arm.

He seemed far more embarrassed than Leslie.

"What's the idea?" he snarled, trying to shake off the other's grip.

Leslie was instantly relieved. Assuredly Celia had not heard the godlike stranger speak, for his speech was of the East side unrefined.

"I don't want you to disappear in your cloud of star dust until I've had a little talk with you. What are you doing here?"

Leslie snapped the question out in a threatening tone.

"I lost my way," replied the wild faun.

"Don't lie!" said Leslie.

The wild faun frowned a little. The white moonlight showed his heavy face to be capable of readily expressed emotion. Leslie saw, too, that for some reason he wished to make his story good.

"I was trying to find a short cut," said the intruder.

"You must make a habit of it. People don't lose their way two nights in succession when the moon is full. You were here last night. Why?"

"H—!" said the wild faun. "Is this Buckingham palace or the White House? I didn't see no sentries at the gate. If you don't like it, I'd better be on my way."

He turned away, as if to walk toward the drive.

"Not yet!" cried the younger man.

"There's a little explaining to be done first."

Perceiving himself to be at a loss verbally, the stranger revised his tactic. This exasperating young man in evening dress must be taught a lesson.

"Bo," said the wild faun coldly, "I don't like your face!"

With that he brought his powerful right arm across with the idea—a wholly diverting one—of altering the sneer on his opponent's features to an expression of fear and agony. He was not quick enough. A left jab caught him on the nose.

"All right!" he said. "If you want it, you can have it!"

He made a vicious spring at Leslie

Barron. Anger beclouded him. Leslie's footwork irritated him. He asked his foe to stand still and have it out man to man. He addressed him as a dancing master, and by other more opprobrious terms.

Finally he measured his distance for a blow that would end it all. The lad in evening dress could box, and was annoyingly active. He had played for the godlike body of the wild faun, and was inflicting hurt.

Just as the strong arm of the intruder was drawing back, there came the sudden sharp cry of an owl, repeated three times. He paused for a second, and turned away his head. It was a tactical error, of which he was conscious too late. Leslie saw his opportunity and made the most of it. He landed a clean blow on the point of the jaw. The wild faun dropped, and, in falling, his head struck the base of an Italian garden marble.

Leslie knelt at the side of his fallen foe. He was undecided whether to alarm the house by calling for help, or to try to carry this big bulk in himself.

A shadow came out of nothingness, and Leslie looked up into the bland face of Mr. Appleton. Since young



The Lad in Evening Dress Could Box, and Was Annoyingly Active.

Barron had not shared the Hanbys confidences, he assumed that their former guest was still in good odor, a friend of the family, and now most certainly a friend in need.

Quickly Leslie explained what had happened. He did not want the little plump man to be frightened. At the moment, he regarded himself in rather an heroic light and Mr. Appleton warmly commended his courage.

"Ah, youth, youth!" apostrophized the little man, whose years had long bereft him of it. "Magnificent!" He stooped down almost timidly. "We must not alarm our good hostess," he said. "Let us carry him to the garage and awaken a chauffeur. I will take the ruffian's feet. You, as the stronger, take his head. I will satisfy myself that he has no weapon concealed."

From the stranger's pocket Mr. Appleton drew a short, heavy billet of wood. He balanced it in his hand, frowning.

"I think this is what is termed a life preserver. It stamps its owner as a criminal by profession. You will probably be entitled to a reward. Mr. Barron. Now, if you will kindly take your end, we will remove him."

Obediently young Barron put his arms under the shoulders of the wild faun. When Appleton remained standing, Leslie looked up. Staring down at him, the little man might have been his Uncle Russell.

Too late, Leslie saw his danger. The life preserver caught him squarely on the head, and he pitched forward over the other unconscious man.

Mr. Appleton smiled happily.

"Very neat!" he murmured. "For a first attempt, very neat indeed—oh, dear me, yes!"

Mr. Appleton gave a skillful imitation of the cry of an owl. From afar came the call of another night-flying bird. The owl that was Mr. Appleton hooted again. Gradually the other cry came nearer. Presently there was a rustling in the thicket, and a bullet head was thrust through.

"Luigi?" called Mr. Appleton softly. "Come at once!"

The man who wriggled out of the bushes was short, but of tremendous breadth. His exclamations and gestures when he saw what seemed to be a pair of dead men were stayed at a word from the other.

"Carry Jim below, and come back for this."

Luigi shouldered the two hundred and twenty pounds that was Jim with ease. He had been gone no more than five minutes when he returned and picked up the lighter man.

The bird sanctuary received Leslie Barron, heir to a great fortune, Luigi Bartoli, in whom the police were interested, and, last of all, Mr. Appleton, who breathed more easily as a heavy shower began. It would smooth out the trampled earth and make tracking impossible.

CHAPTER VIII

When Leslie Barron came again to consciousness, he thought he was in a prison cell. It was a small stone room, electrically lighted. He had been placed on an iron cot. A bandage was about his head, and his crumpled shirt front was blood-stained. Except for bruises and a throbbing head, however, he found that he was unharmed.

He reconstructed what had happened since he went in search of the wild faun, and was forced to admit that the event which stood out most vividly was the inexplicable knavery of Frederick Appleton. The little man had always been so courteous, so respectful, so flattering. He had expressed his regard for the Barron family repeatedly. He had once embarrassed Leslie by comparing his head with that of the Hermes of Praxiteles; and then, incontinently, he had brought a loaded bludgeon down upon it with such force that death had not been very far away. What was the wild faun to Mr. Appleton, that he had sprung thus amazingly to avenge the unknown intruder?

Leslie rose from his cot and walked to the door. It was of heavy wood, metal covered. He could not escape.

No one answered his shouts. Leslie sat down again on the bed.

In his career as a somewhat reckless driver, he had more than once had to wait in a jail cell until he paid his fine. In every instance there had been a penetrating and unpleasant odor about these places. This cell had no such effluvia; nor, as he examined it more closely, had it the appurtenances of the regular jail. Yet it was plain that it had been constructed for no other purpose than to imprison.

Leslie called to mind his talks with Junior as to the threatened dangers surrounding the Gray house. In the beginning they had thrilled him; but then, as pleasant day succeeded pleasant day, Junior and he began to feel annoyed that they had ever anticipated peril.

Leslie was not yet nervous about the outcome of the adventure. The eldest son of Grantley Barron could not disappear without a nation-wide investigation. It would be proved that he had gone from the Gray house into the grounds. Celia would understand why he had gone. He had disappeared in evening clothes, leaving his other effects untouched. The whole neighborhood would be combed by detectives. In the end, his father might have to pay a huge ransom.

This last thought rather amused Leslie. Appleton was probably a professional blackmailer or kidnaper. None would suspect the suave, modest, hard-working little man. Had not Leslie seen the descending black-jack in his hand, he would not now have believed him guilty.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid



The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

by Wyndham Martyn

W.N.U. SERVICE
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

CHAPTER VIII—Continued

—15—

"I wonder where the devil I am!" Leslie murmured.

Then his thoughts turned upon the big fighter whom he had knocked out. That knock-out, Leslie admitted, was more or less accidental. If the unknown stranger had not turned his head obligingly as an owl hooted, he would probably have won; but who was he, that he should stand guard outside the Hanby home at night?

Leslie presently dropped into a troubled sleep. When he awoke, there was the smell of strong tobacco in his cell. He looked into the twinkling eyes of Luigi Bartoli, strong man, colner, and, alas for his impetuous temper, a double murderer.

"Where am I?" Leslie demanded.

Luigi was easily moved to mirth. This seemed an excellent jest.

"If I tell you," he answered, "thees happen to me!" He made the expressive gesture of cutting his throat. "You come with me. If you make a much noise, I break-a your neck, so!" Again the graphic action of a man bending back the neck of a victim until the cervical vertebrae snapped. "Now!"

Leslie knew that this stocky jaller had the power to inflict such a punishment. His forearms were enormous, and his chest measurement could not be less than fifty inches.

Along a narrow stone corridor, lighted by an overhead electric lamp, went Leslie and his jaller. Luigi paused outside a metal-sheathed door, and knocked. Apparently he was hidden to enter, for he gripped Leslie by the wrist and pulled him in.

Mr. Appleton and two companions faced him. It was a room fifteen feet square, well furnished, and artificially lighted.

"Ah!" said Mr. Appleton benevolently. "Here we have Mr. Barron, Jr." He turned to a good-looking, well-dressed woman, who was smok-



"He is Quite a Nice-Looking Boy, Isn't He?" the Woman Said.

ing a Russian cigarette. "I have the highest respect for this young gentleman's family."

"I don't like your way of showing it," Leslie snapped.

He had seen by this time that the third person was the wild faun, wholly at ease in a big chair, puffing at a cigar.

"He is quite a nice-looking boy isn't he?" the woman said, in a low-pitched, charming voice.

"The Barrons are all good-looking," said Mr. Appleton. "I have commented before on the Grecian cast of Mr. Leslie's head."

"Have the kindness to leave my head alone," Leslie growled.

"Certainly, certainly!" Mr. Appleton assented. "My attentions to it last night were dictated by motives of caution, not of hatred. Others were dependent upon me, and I must consider them. Mr. James Delaney here, formerly a power in the ward politics of our common city, seemed at the moment to be a corpse. You are younger, stronger, and fleet of foot than I. I did not think you were in a frame of mind which would permit me to wish you good evening and disappear. Had you reported my presence to Mr. Hanby, a search would have been instituted which might have had unpleasant consequences."

"A search will be made," Leslie snapped, "and, believe me, it will have unpleasant consequences for you all!"

Appleton was urbane, unruffled.

"What makes you suppose that?"

"Because I shall be missed."

"But will you? That's the point."

"Why shouldn't I be missed?" Les-

lie said heatedly. "The Gray house isn't a hotel where one checks out and is promptly forgotten."

"Fortunately for us," said Mr. Appleton, "you did check out."

"That silly lying doesn't impress me."

Leslie was annoyed that the wild faun and the woman found in his assurance something almost humorous.

"But you have checked out—oh dear me, yes!" Mr. Appleton took from his pocket the letter that Leslie wrote to Celia. "Miss Hanby will find this tomorrow. The references hidden from us will be clear to her. You have had a quarrel, it seems, and, with the folly I expect from youth, you have decided to go away. Very well, Mr. Barron, you have carried out your threat. Do you think Miss Celia will sink her pride to send out an alarm for you? No! 'This stupid, unappreciative lad,' she will say, 'will come back later to be forgiven. He shall find that there are others to console me.' Her parents, being still amazingly wrapped up in themselves, will not worry. Until I read this, I was a little perturbed at the situation; but you have clarified it."

Leslie opened his mouth to speak, but thought better of it. He was about to remind Appleton that the household would be alarmed because he had gone away in evening clothes, leaving his other belongings in disarray, and had neglected to take his automobile.

"We have attended to all that," Appleton said kindly, guessing his thoughts. "Ch, dear me, yes! A lifetime of a business in which detail plays so important a part is a great aid. I shall presently pack your grip. I have keys to every room in the house. I shall bring them to you here. Your car will be removed by James. It will be in Philadelphia by noon. Tomorrow night you would not recognize it. James has an interest in the business. You will be our guest here for a time."

"Where are we?" Leslie demanded.

His spirits had fallen. The Barrons were accustomed to his absences and long silences. The unfortunate letter would exasperate Celia. For some weeks, at all events, he would be an unsought prisoner.

"In Westchester county," replied Mr. Appleton. "We are the guests of one who is dear to me." He bowed with distinguished courtesy to the lady. "You will have no opportunity to escape."

"Am I held for ransom?"

"You are held because it would be inconvenient to let you go."

"You said it!" James commented. "So mighty inconvenient that it wouldn't make me sleep no worse if I had orders from the chief to croak you!"

Luigi here made his expressive gesture of slitting a windpipe.

A sudden panic swept over Leslie. He was not used to consorting with criminals. The sense of real danger came to him. He had no chance to escape, and at least two of three men were openly hostile. It must be that he was imperiling the success of some secret affair. The two might sway Appleton to their views. He glanced at them wildly.

"You can't get away with murder!" he cried.

"We should not try," Appleton told him considerably. "It would be an accident. Your body would be picked up in the sound. We might even arrange that it should be clad in a swimming costume. I rather think the Thimble Islands would be suitable—somewhere near Stony creek."

"Why frighten the nice-looking boy?" suggested the woman, in her caressing voice. "It is only if we think he is trying to escape that we

should have to do that. Really and truly, Mr. Barron, we are not murderers or kidnapers.

"You will be held until a certain deal that we are putting through is successfully accomplished. Your treatment depends on yourself. Luigi will be your jailer. Look at him, Mr. Barron, and judge for yourself whether it would be wise to try to escape. He has carried a grand piano on that broad back of his. Luigi has a system which has proved very effective with another uninvited guest here."

"He eat-a out o' my hand now," Luigi said proudly. "Thees one, too!"

Assuredly Leslie could expect no mercy from Luigi, the strong man. So there was another prisoner! Leslie felt lonely and fearful. Why had he allowed himself to take offense at Celia? Celia! It was hard work to keep tears from his eyes as he thought of her. Perhaps she would never know how much he loved her. If cruel death took him here among these hardened men, she would think of him as one who allowed the irritation of a moment to overcome the affection he had protested.

Even in that moment Leslie wondered by what magic of authority the little plump man controlled such ruffians as these. There was no question of his dominance; and this was the same quiet, modest, affable person whom Leslie had grown used to seeing at the Hanby table, the man who rarely ventured an opinion, and listened deferentially to those of others! Of the three, Appleton seemed the most sinister and alarming.

CHAPTER IX

The day on which, as the Hanby family supposed, young Barron had taken his early morning departure, saw the arrival of half a dozen visitors. His absence was in a measure overshadowed. Mrs. Hanby spoke of Leslie, and hoped that there had been no quarrel. Celia assured her mother that he was no more than a friend, and that she was well satisfied to be rid of him for a little while.

Dina Hanby put her arm about the girl's shoulder.

"Do you expect me to believe you?" she asked. "I wonder what was in that letter he wrote to you!"

"Here it is," Celia said. "If you can interpret what he means by threatening to 'jump off the road—for good,' I should like to know."

"I don't understand references to a wild faun," said Mrs. Hanby.

"That was nothing," Celia replied. "Here's dad with his house detective. Not a word to them! I'm going to play tennis with my new cousin. He looks most attractive. I've often wanted to contrast Ann Arbor and New Haven."

Dina looked at the two as they sauntered to the courts. Leslie had been very unwise to go just now, she thought.

"You two look as if you were conspiring," she said to her husband.

"I'm reminding Bill of what he said a few weeks back. He remarked that it was beneath the dignity of a lord of the manor to do his own sleuthing. Bill was boosting himself for the job."

"Have I fallen down?" Bill demanded.

Hanby's bantering tone ceased. Dina could see that something worried him.

"Bill," he said, "you have; but I shame myself, too. I assumed, rather illogically, that when Miss Selenos proved merely an emerald in disguise, we had been making mountains from molehills. Seymour's letter puzzled me; but when nothing happened, I put that aside. There was one other threat."

"The woman who said that Red Kerr was killed because he was like you in build? Oh, Hil, you don't think that was anything serious?"

"It prevents us from being dull," replied her husband, laughing. "I find I rather thrive on suspense, and certainly this house has given us enough surprises one way and another. I'm now due to show it to Tom Burton. He's a man who always has a hobby—some sort of bug or other. I've got to listen. Lords of the manor have their duties."

"Do you think he's nervous?" Bill Pelham asked, as he disappeared.

"Not a bit," replied Mrs. Hanby. "He's getting annoyed, and that means that he wants to fight. His mental reactions are quite simple. Look to your laurels, Bill, or he will get ahead of you in this affair. I wonder if there is anything in it!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

*The Mystery of a
Haunted Mansion*

by Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn
CHAPTER IX—Continued

—16—

She turned her head to where her husband was walking with Professor Burton, whose son was trying to impress Celia with the idea that a college boy, at twenty, stands on an intellectual eminence not easily comprehensible to others. Professor Burton held a chair in philosophy, but it was with living things that his leisure was occupied. Mrs. Burton and Mrs. Hanby were cousins.

"No," said the professor, "I've long ago given up the coleoptera in favor of something more fascinating. I started by way of the reptiles, and came logically to the birds."

"Logically?" said Hanby. "I don't see that, but then I'm ignorant in these matters. If you're interested in birds, you've come to the right spot. Tom, I've got about the best bird sanctuary in the state."

On his way to it Hanby poured into Professor Burton's ears some of the wisdom that had come to him over the wire from the unknown millionaire ornithologist. Hanby's memory was good, and he forgot nothing.

"You flatter me," said the other, when he finished. "You have quoted almost verbatim from my article published in the May number of Popular Natural History."

"So that's where he got it from!" Hanby commented, a trifle ruffled. "I thought the old faker was giving me something from his own published dope."

Hanby related the incident. Professor Burton shook his head.

"You must have made a mistake in the name. Remember, Hil, this is my pet hobby, and I know every writer on our birds. I'm president of my State Ornithological association, and corresponding member of a score of others. I'm in touch with every ornithologist in this country, but I have never heard of your millionaire. He is neither a contributor to the literature of the subject nor a donor of funds for bird conservation. Some of your friends have been playing a joke on you."

Half an hour later the professor had changed his clothes to khaki and puttees. He was armed with sketch books, notebooks, and a costly camera. He declined any aid. He even resented it. Every now and then it could be seen that he despised the amateur ornithologist. His luncheon had been put up for him, and he promised to be in time to dress for dinner.

He was glad, as he fought his way along, that he was armed with leather gauntlets and stout clothes. Nature had placed about this little sanctuary a seemingly impenetrable barrier.

He had begun to despair of reaching the distant mound when he saw that this solid hedge came to an end. He stepped from it to a path worn by the foot of man—a path three feet across, bearing the impress of recent treading.

Professor Burton set out to follow the path to its end. Presently it brought him to a stream, sunk at least ten feet below the surrounding ground. It was this stream, he supposed, which had been diverted in order that the twenty-acre lake half a mile away might be fed.

He resumed his silent walk along the path. The acrid smell of a cigar smote his nose. He knew the noisome long and narrow cigars which only native Indians enjoy. Then the odor was wafted from him, and he found his path dropping toward the stream level.

The professor stopped. He had suddenly encountered a stranger.

It would be difficult to say which of the two seemed the more amazed. The professor looked upon a small but well-proportioned man dressed with conservative elegance. The stranger's face was florid, and his mild blue eyes were accentuated in size by reason of strong lenses.

Mr. Appleton, for his part, thought he had run across an inquiring scout master laden with all the impedimenta that his position demanded. Burton was tall and slight, and suggested erudition.

"How did you get here," Mr. Appleton began, "and by whose leave have you trespassed thus?"

"I am kin by marriage to Mr. Hanby," said the professor. "He gave me permission. Your status, sir, is not so clear."

"In order to make my position clear," he said frankly. "I must term myself a sanitation expert. Mr. Hanby has heard that former tenants of the Gray house have suffered from sewer-gas poisoning. He does not wish to alarm his family and visitors. I am, therefore, making a sort of secret investigation. Much water settles here, as the luxuriant foliage shows. I have been com-

missioned to determine upon the healthfulness of this spot, and to make what recommendations I see fit.

"Before doing so, I should like you to come with me and see more. You cannot possibly judge from here."

Professor Burton followed the other along a winding pathway, until he was in the thicket's very center. When his guide paused on the edge of an opening, the professor exclaimed upon the oddity of a lake filled in, as he had supposed, being open instead.

"It was only partially filled in," Mr. Appleton told him. "When I took charge of the work, I had my own views—very interesting views, too," he added, chuckling. "Oh, dear me, yes! They amuse me even now. You can settle a moot point for me." He looked over the edge of the opening, gazing intently at some low bushes whose roots were in the moist earth. "What is that?" Appleton asked. "Look at it and tell me."

Professor Burton moved toward the edge and peered down.

"Is this one of the things that amuse you?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Mr. Appleton, smiling. With that he gave the other a push. The professor, with waving arms, sought to recover his balance, but failed. He went up to his knees in mud. His precious camera had parted company from him. The spectacle of the amiable gentleman with the florid face, who smiled down at him angered him. He shook a muddy fist.

"You shall pay for this outrage!" he shouted.

"Perhaps," said Appleton cryptically, "but not just yet."

Mr. Appleton gave another of his excellent owl imitations. In a few moments Luigi Bartoli joined him.

"In order that he might not escape," Appleton explained, "I had to push him down there. He enjoyed



"You Shall Pay for This Outrage!" He Shouted.

it less than I. Your task, Luigi, is to get him out and put him with the man who came first."

Adolf Smucker had proved a tractable prisoner. In reality he lacked the courage to do anything that might bring him punishment. He realized that he was the prisoner of three men who had powers of life and death over him. Of Appleton he saw almost nothing.

James Delaney, the second in command, knew Smucker's sort, and despised him. Luigi was his jailer. He enjoyed incendiary talk. The day could not come too quickly which would permit of looting, unattended with death penalties.

By this time Smucker was so much the prey of delusions that he had almost forgotten his home and family. He brooded upon the chaotic day when, by the alchemy of strange events, he should be high among those whose mission it was to destroy Luigi, who cringed to capital in the guise of Appleton, would be an early victim.

Adolf Smucker looked up, that afternoon, to find his cell invaded by a stranger—not such a man as the previous young capitalist in evening dress, but a worker clad in muddy khaki, stained and torn.

Professor Burton wondered at the heartiness of his welcome. After he had been an hour in Smucker's company, he spoke incisively.

"Your mania," he said, "is termed dementia praecox. Our word 'precocious' comes from the common root.

It means that your intellect is unable to assimilate the ideas you crowd into it. Be kind enough to leave me in silence. I find such twaddle as yours extremely tedious."

Infuriated at this, Smucker attacked the professor. He was rescued by Luigi. The professor was bigger, stronger, and in a rather evil temper. Luigi dragged him to another small stone room and shut the door.

"What the devil?" said Leslie Barron, rudely awakened.

"I am not the devil," snapped the professor, "but I feel like him. I have been brutally beaten. A Caliban from southern Italy has promised to twist my head from my neck. I am in no mood for the ordinary social amenities."

"Another out!" sighed Leslie. "Tell me, if you've any decency left, whereabouts I am."

"You are in what my cousin Hilton Hanby terms a bird sanctuary. You, I take it, are one of the birds I presume that I am another."

"I was blackjacked by that infernal Appleton. I had an idea that I'd been put in an automobile and taken miles away."

Leslie recounted the misadventures he had suffered.

"Never mind!" said the other. "You will be rescued when they get me out."

"Cheery little optimist, aren't you?" Leslie retorted. "That man Appleton is the devil. He'll arrange it so that you won't be looked for."

"Impossible!" said the professor.

Leslie Barron was right. Appleton, who had a skill with the pen that might have earned him a great name among forgers, was at that very moment looking at Professor Burton's notes and forging a letter. He called to mind the professor's way of speaking. This is what Mrs. Burton read:

Have sustained injury to corner of right eye through a thorn spike. Inadvisable to trust to local physician. Have accepted offer of passing motorist to go to a specialist. Do not worry. Will telephone you from the city.

"Tom is always nervous about his eyesight," Mrs. Burton declared. "It is just like him to rush to see a specialist. Oh, why was I out?"

"You couldn't have done anything if you had been here," her cousin said, comforting her. "We shall have a telephone call before long."

But nothing was heard from Professor Burton.

CHAPTER X

At one o'clock in the morning Bill Pelham heard a rap on his door. Hilton Hanby entered. Behind him was Junior. They were both dressed as if for hiking.

"Am I asleep at the switch?" Bill cried, rubbing his eyes. "What is it?"

"Florence Burton is going to see the Pine Plains police tomorrow," Hanby answered. "I can't blame her. You know what that means. Every movement of Tom's will be traced. I suppose I shall have to tell everything I know, from Miss Selenos down to this last disappearance. Dina says she thinks Tom has been murdered."

"You don't mean to say you've got some explanation?" inquired Pelham, with incredulity in his voice.

"I mean just that. If you'll get up and put some such kit as this on, I'll tell you."

"Shoot!" Pelham urged. "I'll be ready in three minutes."

"The last I saw of Tom Burton was when he walked toward that bird sanctuary—those acres that I've guarded so carefully. I don't deny he might have run a spike in his eye. It may be that he's in a nursing home, and we shall have a wire from him in the morning. I've been thinking about that sanctuary a whole lot. It doesn't owe its conservation to any idea of mine. I should never have thought of it but for that talk over the telephone with a man who deliberately slurred his name so that I shouldn't get it straight. Another thing—this man pretended to be a writer on bird subjects, and yet he quoted in extenso from an article that Tom Burton wrote. The man was a liar, but he gained his end. I did not have the thicket removed. He evidently wanted it kept as it was, and I obediently fell into the trap." Hanby's manner was impressive. "Bill, there's something wrong about that bird sanctuary!"

"I believe you're right," agreed Pelham, much impressed. "Who could have done it?"

"Dad thinks," Junior broke in, "that we ought to see what that bird sanctuary really contains." He took an automatic pistol from his pocket, and banded it to Pelham. "Dad and I have one each."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

CHAPTER X—Continued

—17—

"This is certainly rubbing it into the house detective," Pelham grinned. "What next, Junior? Do I salute you hereafter?"

"We begin our investigation at day-break," Junior continued. "If any people are there, we shall have a better chance to surprise and overpower them."

"Does Dina know?" Pelham asked.

"No. This is one of the few times I've had a secret from her. She would worry. You know, old man, there may be danger. You're a deputy. It will be up to you to arrest them. That's why we are taking you along. Junior wanted to do the stunt alone. Observe his sullen face. He thinks we are going to steal his stuff."

"That cheers me," Pelham said. "I'm ready." He put a large hunting-knife in his pocket, and some cord. "No trained house detective ever ventures on a man-hunting expedition without a small ax. Junior, forget the difference in our rank, and get me one."

When the boy had gone, he turned to Hanby.

"Hi, old top," he laughed, "I've been d—d gloomy the last few days, but I honestly believe you've hit on something good!"

"I don't know about good," said the other slowly. "If the sanctuary holds the key to the mystery, I don't imagine we shall see poor Burton alive again. You see, he blundered right into the thick of things. If I'm right he ran into the bunch that killed Red Kerr. I think that note was a forgery."

The long, creeper-clad front of the Gray house faced the south.

The distance from the extreme boundary of the building and the wire that inclosed the thicket was not more than fifty feet.

When dawn came slowly down the skies, it found Hanby cutting methodically at the wire fence. When the others had passed in, he twisted the cut ends together, so that no passerby would notice that an entrance had been made.

Permitting impetuous youth to bear the brunt of the opposition offered by the undergrowth, the expedition pushed its way forward. Ahead of them they heard the brook, and were eager to come to it.

The three soon stood in an area lighted from above by the early light filtering through a screen of leaves. There was a chlorotic, eerie quality about this illumination. The stream flowed to them out of the darkness, and a few yards below it disappeared into a black channel.

"Can we work upstream?" Hanby asked.

Junior made an examination.

"It seems impossible. This place has been cleared out for some special reason—probably because the brook makes that sharp turn, and they had to smooth it out."

"Exactly, Sherlock," his father glibed. "Even I see that; but why?"

Junior, in answer, clutched the other's arm. He pointed upstream to the tunnel from which the water poured in unvarying volume.

"What's that?" he demanded.

Peering into the shadows, the others could see that the stream carried a burden—a large dark mass that came steadily toward them. Sometimes it was completely immersed, and then it seemed to lift itself from the water, as if it were a huge animal swimming.

"G—d!" cried Hanby. "It's a man's body." The thing was now almost at his feet. He nerved himself to stoop down for a closer inspection. "It may be poor old Tom Burton!"

Shuddering a little, he turned the corpse over so that its face could be seen. The sightless eyes of Adolf Smucker stared up at him.

Death had not been kind to that mean and evil face. Smucker had come to his end in agony and fear, and those emotions were graven on the face at which the three stared. His neck, in life thin and bony, was now black and swollen. On his narrow forehead was a purple bruise, stretching to the roots of the sparse hair.

Instinctively Hilton Hanby released his hold, and the stream again took up its burden.

"Thank God it wasn't Tom!" Pelham whispered.

"Perhaps, if we wait long enough, he'll come by," Hanby said gloomily.

He was depressed to think that he had allowed Junior to come with him. There was no doubt now that danger lay ahead of them. He knew he could not expect his son calmly to leave his father and his friend to face it alone; and if anything should happen where by not all of them returned, what would Dina do?

Why had they murdered Smucker? And what was Smucker doing here?

"Well," he said aloud, answering his own question, "speculation is silly and time-wasting. We've got to follow the stream. We can't do it down here, but the channel is easily seen from the outside."

The three made their silent way along the narrow path, each with the conviction that at the end of it some

thing of a vaguely dangerous character would be found.

Pelham cautioned his companions to proceed more carefully.

"D—n it," he said crossly, "why walk upright? For all you know, some one's looking along rifle sights at you this very moment. Crouch, man, crouch!"

"It's too early for anyone to be about yet," Hanby said. "At that, I think your advice is good."

Suddenly he stopped and picked up a fountain pen. On a silver band around it were the initials "T. B."

"It's Tom's!" he whispered. "That letter was a forgery, after all. He's somewhere here. God save him from Smucker's fate!"

Hanby put the pen in his pocket and pushed on.

"Appleton lied," he said a minute later. "Look—the lake wasn't filled in, after all!"

The path led them suddenly, with a right-angled turn and a quick descent, to the stream level again. It ran through a hollow a hundred yards in length. The place was a natural amphitheater. Coarse-meshed wire had been stretched from side to side, and was so densely overgrown that the hollow, as observed from the roof of the Gray house, seemed but a natural part of the five acres that had been a lake.

The three shrank into the bushes at the edge.

"Who did it?" Junior whispered.

"Why was it done?" Pelham answered.

"We've got to cross this, if we're to find out," Hanby said.

He led the way, keeping to the edge of the leafy wall of this natural tent. He stopped them with a gesture. The odor that floated toward them was unmistakable.

"Coffee!" they whispered in unison.

Hanby went on even more warily than before. When he stopped the



With a Roar of Anger, He Sprang at the Crouching Lad and Had Him by the Throat.

two behind saw the reason. He was looking down a narrow tunnel piercing the solid earth, shored up with timbers, as mine passages are protected from the caving in of rocks or earth. It was from this passage that the coffee odor came. No light was to be seen at its end.

Hanby measured fifty paces before he stopped. Apparently he had run into solid ground. Then he saw that the passage bent sharply to the left and when he turned his eyes, he could see light coming from a doorway. It was not daylight, but came from some artificial source.

The doorway amazed them. It was cut in a solid stone wall—masonry of the same sort as that of the Gray house.

"Dad!" Junior whispered excitedly. "This is our house—I'm certain!"

The three intruders passed through the entrance. It seemed odd that it had no door. The light which enabled them to dispense with the flashlight came from a low-powered electric bulb in the masonry ceiling of a large chamber. The insufficient illumination showed the room to be almost ten feet in height, and filled with piles of lumber.

Now for the first time they heard voices. They drew back into an unlighted chamber, of whose dimensions they could not judge. Here they waited, having for the moment no set plan of action. Junior's guess seemed to be a correct one. For some reason which might soon be discovered, the owner of the Gray house was allowed to use only one-third of his cellar space. Unknowns occupied the rest, and had piled lumber in it. More than that—unknowns made their homes here and breakfasted here.

When the distant voices ceased, Hanby turned on the flashlight and looked about him. They had strayed into a storeroom. On shelves were potatoes, onions, carrots, pears, and apples. The floor was of concrete, and an electric light bulb was the source of illumination.

"I bet I'm paying for their juice!" Hanby whispered.

He stopped suddenly. At last he heard footsteps. The three took what cover they could in the corners.

Luigi entered, and switched on the light. It was Junior whom he first saw. With roar of anger, he sprang at the crouching lad and had him by the throat.

Hanby remembered those dreadful bruises on Smucker's neck. He raised the heavy cane and brought it down on the strangler's head with all his strength.

"Thanks, dad!" said Junior, making an effort at superb calm.

Bill Pelham, with a yachtsman's skill, trussed up Luigi with knots that the ruffian could not break when he came to. The whole thing had occupied only a few seconds, and had made little sound. Luigi's cry of rage, apparently, had brought no one to investigate its cause. They left him to lie in a corner, covered with sacking. The odds were growing more favorable.

Hanby was amazed to see Bill Pelham stop before another narrow door and slip a key into the lock. He had not noticed that his friend had taken a bundle of keys from the man he was binding.

Pelham worked quietly. The oiled lock made no sound. Darkness was on either side of the door. As it swung open, the three, listening intently, heard a sound as of a man sighing.

"Celia! Celia!" sighed the unseen "Les!" Junior whispered, and turned his flashlight on his friend.

Pelham shut the door and looked about for the inevitable electric light.

Leslie Baron blinked at them in amazement. For weeks—or so it seemed—he had looked only into the cruel face of a jailer; and now he saw Celia's father, Celia's brother, and Bill Pelham. His face was blood-stained, and there was a deep cut over one eye, but he sprang to his feet readily enough. They could see that he was practically unharmed.

While the bird sanctuary was being violated, Mr. Appleton drank his early coffee and took his cereal and fruit in his customary unhurried way; but ill humor sat on his florid face, and the eyes peering through his thick lenses no longer looked childlike and bland.

Three people were in the room with him—the woman who had a dozen years ago supplanted his wife, Jim Delaney, and Luigi Bartoli. Jim had been a bully all his life, a man who had innumerable times proved the fatuity of the axiom that every bully is a coward. By his side stood the big Sicilian, gesticulating wildly, and voluble beyond words.

"You murdered a man unnecessarily," said Appleton coldly.

Stripped of the exuberant verbiage interspersed with parenthetical remarks in his native tongue, Luigi's story was this:

He had gone into the little room that was Smucker's cell, there to sleep off some strong wine, and to escape from the observant eye of John Delaney. While slumbering, he had suddenly awakened to find that Smucker had stolen his knife and was about to slit his throat. He had not murdered the man. He had done what he did to save his own life. In moments of vinous rage he did not properly estimate his own strength. He had been horrified to find Smucker lifeless, but Luigi contended that not a jury in the land would convict him of murder.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

CHAPTER X—Continued

—18—

"You fool!" said Appleton, coldly venomous. "I do not object to your killing him. It is the manner of disposing of the body that stamps you as an imbecille. Why didn't you bury it where nobody could find it? What madness made you put it in the stream? It is beyond recovery by us, but the others will find it, and they will hold it like a club—not over you or Jim, but over me. You will find it hurts you, too! Well, it's done now, and we know that it will be discovered. Also we know that the men we are dealing with will make capital out of it." Appleton's icy rage grew with the thought of the disaster. "I shall be the sufferer—I, who thought that after tonight I should have no worries in the world!" He pointed at Luigi. "And this mass of clay from Palermo's underworld, who has had sanctuary here, and food and drink, when he should be in an Italian jail, has twice imperiled us!"

"That isn't fair, Fred," the woman protested. Alone of them she seemed to be in no fear of him. "Kerr, or Chapin, or whatever his real name was, got that job because he knew there was some mystery here, and he hoped to blackmail us. Some one must have given us away. Either Luigi had to get him, or we might all have been discovered."

"Stupid!" he commented crossly. "Why do you all persist in misunderstanding me? You seem to think I am worrying about the death of an escaped convict, when I am only remembering that Luigi, instead of concealing the body here, must throw it in the lake, under the impression that there was an end of it." He waved his hand to the Sicilian. "Go! Remember, we need all your strength today. Sleep, if you want to. Jim will call you when we are ready."

Luigi's great carcass bowed, and animated itself with relief. His was a child's mentality. He bowed to them all. Jim liked his cooking.

"I getta you your breakfas', Jeem," he said, smiling. "I make-a the tomato, garlic, and potato you like."

He took his way to the storeroom gayly. After the meal he would sleep. After that, there would be work for him that no other man here could perform. Jim Delaney was stronger than most men, but he was not like Luigi, who had carried a grand piano on his back.

"You see, Jim," said Appleton, when the Sicilian had gone, "that we are now in the position of dealing with people who hold something definite against us."

"They're in as deep as we are," said Jim.

"Nothing of the kind! We may suspect them of a dozen murders, but whereas we have only suspicion they have a corpus delicti—actually the body of the crime. They can't help finding it. It has cost me a great deal of money and time to make it certain that they must find it. That's one of the exasperating things!"

"Forget it, Fred," the woman said, patting his head. "Two weeks from now we'll be in Europe, living like lords."

"Sure, chief," Jim declared. "They won't want to give you away, anyhow."

"There's risk in the whole affair," Appleton retorted. "If the deal goes through safely, they will use their knowledge to cut my price. If I refuse, they will pay, perhaps, but they'll get me for Luigi's foolishness. If they are discovered, they will have to accuse me to save themselves. Luck doesn't keep on. It was sheer luck that the police dropped the Red Chapin case when they found the mangled body of an old cell mate who had threatened to kill him. This thing worries me. Of course, you might get the body at the culvert, but you would most likely be seen. Safer, perhaps, to let things go. See that Luigi is ready when we need him."

Jim walked to the storeroom, calling the Sicilian by name. This cellar had been so constructed as to be sound proof.

It was Junior's quick ear that heard him first, as he passed the door of Leslie Barron's cell.

"They'll find that man and know we're here," he whispered.

"We'll get him as he's finding him," Hanby said.

There were four now who crept toward the storeroom. They entered it just as Jim was kneeling by Luigi's side, untying his bonds. It was Leslie who made the first spring at him. Jim had not a chance. Outnumbered, taken by surprise, unable to rise to his feet, his struggle was futile. Side by side, he and Luigi nibbled viciously against gags.

"Now for Tom Burton!" said Hanby, when they left the storeroom.

When the door opened, Burton stood up and clenched his fists. He knew that some day Luigi's inherent love of torture would lapse into some such exhibition of violence as would kill him. Burton had great ideas of Nordic racial pre-eminence. He would show it at even in their moments of dying, the Nordic strain was the thoroughbred one.

"Ah!" he said satirically. "The gentle Luigi! Good morrow. Call ban!"

Not until that moment had Hanby really liked Burton. It was as he saw him standing braced for punishment and unafraid, that there came a change of heart.

"Tom, old man," he said. "Junior Bill, and I are here. We've trussed up two gallows birds. How many more are there?"

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

— By —

Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service

Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

When the light was turned on, it was seen that Tom Burton had suffered at his warder's hands. His face was thin and lined, his body bruised and aching. There were tears in his eyes as he shook his rescuers' hands.

Burton had little to tell. He knew only that the infamous Appleton, who had tipped him into the pit, ruled here absolutely. Burton had seen only Luigi, Jim, and Smucker. There might be others of whom he had not heard. He had no idea for what purpose Appleton had made his home here, or that he had been imprisoned beneath his cousin's house.

"We're here to clean out this place," Hanby said. "You'd better come along with us."

The searchers made slow progress, because they were as yet unaware of the number of inhabitants this subterranean fastness concealed. The general layout was speedily made clear. The large cellar with the lumber was the main feature. Then there were three little cells, a kitchen, a storeroom, and one other apartment. It was through the doors of this last that by straining their ears they could hear the faint hum of human voices.

While they were wondering whether to attempt to force an entrance, or to wait until the people within came out, they were relieved of making the de-



"Poor Old Huckleberry Hawk!" She Mocked.

cision. Mr. Appleton stepped out. He looked into the mouth of an automatic pistol in Hilton Hanby's hand.

For a moment flaming hate looked out of his eyes; then it died away. He was again the bland and suave little man whom they had known so long.

"I dislike revolvers," he said gently. "Furthermore, I am unarmed. You have something to say to me?"

"Quite a lot," said Hanby. "I trust you and your friends have been comfortable in my house. I begin to understand now on what you expended so much money. Mr. Douglas was puzzled about it. You are going to tell me why you spent it."

There was no question but that a look of relief passed over Appleton's face at what was virtually a confession that his purpose remained a secret.

"Call it a fad," he observed benevolently. "This living underground is nothing new. The famous duke of Portland, as you no doubt remember, constructed a ballroom and a riding school under the lake of his famous Welbeck Abbey estate. Consider me a humble disciple."

"He did what he chose on his own property. You are trespassing on mine."

Appleton sighed profoundly.

"That makes a difference, I admit. Well, Mr. Hanby, charge me what you think is a fair price for my tenancy and I will pay."

"There's another charge, too," Hanby reminded him. "Murder! It doesn't matter whether you strangled Smucker or your strong-arm men did it. You'll have trouble dodging the chair!"

"When you have made a complete confession, duly witnessed and signed, I shall turn you over to the police. Appleton, your goose is cooked, and you ought to have sense enough to know it. Why have you been scheming for years to get possession of this place? Why did you keep tenants away?"

"It was a fad," Appleton returned blandly. "Every man has one. You, for example, desired to be the owner of an estate. Well, that was my ambition, too. I have lost. You have won. Why, then, not be generous and let me go?"

He made a movement as if he wished to lead them away from the door. He did not notice that Pelham slipped behind him and produced a bunch of keys. Appleton was only aware that the door opened suddenly and he was pushed into the room.

It was the only apartment well furnished. Breakfast things were on a small table. In a chair a woman, still pretty, but no longer young, was smoking a cigarette. She jumped up in alarm.

"What's the matter, Fred?" she cried. "Who are these men?"

"Mr. Hanby," Appleton began amiably, "is incensed at discovering our retreat. Having found nothing irregular, he decides to accuse us all of murder. You are witness that this poor creature"—he pointed to Burton—"assaulted a giant huckleberry hawk intent on his destruction."

"My G—d!" cried Burton, incoherent in his anger. "He asked me to look at a giant fuchsia moth!"

"There is no such thing, of course," Appleton said pityingly. "You can see that his mind has gone. I had him put under partial guard. I shall admit that he suffered from a homicidal mania? He assaulted Smucker directly he came in, and later, unfortunately, he killed the poor fellow. There are witnesses to this."

"All d—d lies!" roared the professor. "Execrable falsehoods!"

"As to Smucker," continued Appleton, "he came here for the sole purpose of setting fire to the Gray house and killing its owner and all its inmates. I kept him here because I liked and respected Mr. Hanby and his family." Appleton's keen eyes were fixed on Hanby's face. "If Mr. Hanby denies knowledge of Smucker's avowed enmity, I shall be greatly surprised."

"We found him with matches and gasoline all ready to set fire to your house," the woman contributed.

"I don't doubt it," Pelham said dryly; "and I don't doubt that you were glad enough to stop him. If he had burned the Gray house, you would have died in its ruins. So far you haven't made out a case."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"If you don't want to be reasonable," she said, "that is your affair. If you want a murder trial, with a relative of the Hanbys in danger of hanging, call in the police. Two credible witnesses saw the murder committed."

"Madam," said the professor coldly. "you lie!"

"Poor old huckleberry hawk!" she mocked. "You've probably forgotten very conveniently, but you'll be hanged, for all that, if the police ever know about it!" There was a certain insolence about her that compelled admiration. "We may as well tell the truth," she went on. "Fred and I have been fond of each other for years. His wife wouldn't consent to a divorce, and my husband can't be located. Fred arranged this place where we could be undisturbed. He didn't fill in the lake completely, as you've no doubt found out. He fenced it with barbed wire, and planted thorn hedges to keep out trespassers."

Hanby interrupted her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

The Mystery of a Haunted Mansion

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

By Wyndham Martyn

CHAPTER X—Continued

—19—

"Who was it telephoned me all that stuff about keeping it a bird sanctuary?"

"Fred did," she answered. "I suggested it, and got the data out of a magazine. Rather clever, wasn't it? We were dreadfully upset when you bought it. You wouldn't have done so if you hadn't known Douglas personally, because everything, as a rule, went through Fred's hands. We tried everything—threats of violence, attempts to prey on your superstition. Everything failed but the attempt to make you feel that you were doing a noble thing in protecting the birds." She had a musical laugh. "You don't mind my laughing, do you?" she asked of Hanby. "It really was so quaint!" "Go ahead!" he said grimly. "The laugh was on me then, but there's a useful old proverb about those who laugh last."

"Oh, you're on top now," she said; "and I'm not even asking you to be generous or forgiving. I'm asking you not to be silly and get a dreadful lot of notoriety. Your wife and daughters would hate it. We have lived here without your permission. That was wrong, but it can be adjusted. As God is my witness, we saved you from that dreadful little anarchist Smucker. That's a pretty good score for us. If the case comes to trial—the murder, I mean—I will testify to the fact that Smucker taunted Professor Burton, and that the professor killed him in self-defense."

"I deny it absolutely!" cried Burton. "This thing must be cleared up. I have my career to think of."

"And a most useful one, no doubt," Appleton said politely. "I shall be glad to testify that on the whole you behaved well. I shall assure the court that had I believed you were really the celebrated Professor Burton, I should not have detained you." He turned to Hanby. "We thought the poor man merely believed himself to be the learned professor."

"Lies, lies!" shouted Burton. "I have no man's blood on my hands. I demand that the police be called in immediately!"

"What for?" Appleton asked. "To arrest me for trespass?"

"I am not thinking of trespass. I am thinking of murder."

"What murder?" Appleton asked pleasantly. "In murder cases there is always needed a corpus delicti—a murdered man. Where is he in this case? Can you produce him, professor?"

"Quite the best thing to do," said the woman, "is to let us go away. I have a good many things here, but I could leave tonight. I say tonight, because we don't want to be seen. These people—the professor and that nice-looking boy—have grievances against us, I admit, but in both instances it was their own fault. The boy assaulted a friend and almost killed him."

"Did you, Les?" Junior demanded.

"It was some fellow who hung around the house at night. Celia saw him, and called him a wild faun. Naturally I wasn't going to stand for that, so I laid for him and started something."

"Very jolly of you!" said the woman, smiling. "Wouldn't the yellow papers enjoy writing about it? I think you acted splendidly, but the reporters wouldn't. They make most fearful fun of youth and moonlight and romance. I'm sure Miss Hanby would enjoy it. We'll promise to be gone before daybreak tomorrow. You see, we haven't done any damage. Mr. Hanby, what is it to be?"

"I'll have to talk this over in private," he decided.

"We will await your decision," Appleton said, smiling.

"But not here," returned Hanby. "I'm going to lock you up till I know what is to be the outcome." He smiled a little, and looked at the woman. "I'm a little afraid of you. I think you may be the brains of this whole affair. You shall occupy Leslie's cell for a while."

The laughing look died from her face. Hanby had been right in thinking her a dangerous person.

"I won't go!" she cried.

But in the end Appleton persuaded her. His attitude was perfect. He commended Hanby on his decision.

"You are quite justified," he said benignly. "We are admitted trespassers, and have no locus standi. I consider that you are well within your rights. Come, Belle, don't be silly! It will only be for a little while."

Belle, who knew him and his moods better than anyone else, was not deceived, as were the others. The men, watching, thought they saw Appleton serene in the consciousness of having committed no heinous sins. Belle knew that murder was in his heart at that moment.

"Now, Les and Junior," said Hanby, when the doors had been shut on the captured pair, "go down and bring up the wild faun. Stick your guns in his ribs. If he has any sense, he'll come quietly."

"I'll go, too," said Bill Pelham. "I tied those knots."

When they had gone, Burton turned to his cousin.

"Hil," he cried, "you don't think I killed that man?"

"Not for a minute; but you might have a lot of trouble explaining things, all the same. I'm relieved at his death, I'll admit. I didn't tell Dina, or even Bill, but Mrs. Smucker warned me that he had stolen some money from his old father, and had probably bought a gun. He was seen at the Grand Central, where he inquired how to get to Pine Plains. Mrs. Smucker said he had made threats to kill me. That ties up with Appleton's story. No matter what other reasons he had, I believe he did keep Smucker from trying to kill me."

"Do you mean to let them go then?"

"It will depend on what we get from this thug that Les and Junior are bringing."

Jim Delaney had too much sense to try to escape from three armed men. The fortunes of war had changed, and he was already considering the favorable position of one who turns state's evidence. He sat where Hanby directed him. He could see that the owner of the Gray house was not to be trifled with.

"It's enough for you to know," Hanby began, "that Appleton and Belle are shut away in those cells. We know all about them. I'm going to ask you some questions. Lie if you want to."

"I'm not going to lie, boss," responded Jim eagerly. "That wouldn't do me no good now, would it?"

"None at all, but I don't want to influence you. Bill, take down his evidence, please. Just explain who you are, and why you and that—"

"Luigi," Jim volunteered. "He's a wop from Sicily. Him and me are employed by Appleton. We've been storing the stuff and guarding it." Jim smiled ruefully. "I don't know who give us away, but you certainly came when it did the most harm!"

"Naturally," Hanby commented wholly ignorant of what the other meant. "I'm giving you the opportunity of telling me all about it in your own way."

"It all began," Jim declared, "when Appleton bought Seymour's booze. This Seymour was a rich man. His wife was from a swell family in the South, and he expected to live here all his life. He had the house on a lease, with the option of purchase, and he meant to buy, see? So he sends home to England for a stock of booze—whisky in barrels, and port in wood, and liqueurs, and champagnes, and everything a man wants. Them guys in England, when they're well fixed, buy wholesale, and they all have cellars and outlers to look after them. This Seymour, he put in enough so he'd never have to buy anything else if he lived to be a hundred. When his kids was drowned and his wife died, he went back home, and, although he was past fifty, he got into his old regiment. Then his three brothers was killed in the war and he's a lord or something. Money wasn't anything to him. He wanted to get out of this place, and he liked Appleton, so he took Appleton's check for the cellar. What does Appleton do but get Luigi to build a wall across one end of it? Luigi's a mason by trade. Appleton wasn't like me. I thought prohibition was a joke when it come in. I was tending bar down on Third avenue. Appleton had friends in Washington, and they knew booze was out for keeps."

Jim was here permitted to light a cigar, while Bill put down the main incidents in this recital.

"Yes," Jim went on reflectively. "that give Appleton the idea. He knew booze was going to be scarce, so he started to make a place to cache it in till the price was right and he could dispose of it all at one crack. He made new plans of the house, and left out the cellar where the stuff was stored. I guess that fooled you Mr. Hanby."

"It did," Hanby admitted.

"He'll fool anybody," said Jim, who was enjoying the interest aroused by his story. "I'll say he's the slickest bird I've come across. He plans for the year after next—that's the sort of guy he is. He had the lake partly filled in. Then he had some dago laborers fix the stream, build a tunnel in here, and make the place livable. They didn't know what they was doing, and didn't care, so long as they was paid good. Then he put Luigi in as caretaker. You see the cops were after Luigi, and he didn't stand a chance with that build of his. Any dick could 'a' nabbed him any time. Luigi likes to drink and sleep, and this was meat to him."

"What did you do?" Pelham asked.

"I used to shoot the stuff down the stream. I used to get it off the boats from friends, drive up to the upper road, and put the cases under the culvert, so they'd drift down here. Luigi would pile 'em up, so that when the day come he could dump 'em in the stream and they'd drift down to Boyle's farm. I guess we're out of luck. Tonight's the night. Everything

and everyone is fixed, and now you bust up the party!"

"How were you going to have taken it away, if there's so much of it?"

"The road is going to be put under repair after dark, and all traffic will detour. That leaves us uninterrupted. We've got forty ten-ton trucks all ready. They'll get busy at the right time, and take out the stuff, which will be down at that lake by Boyle's barn. There won't be a hitch. This is a great fixing game, and I know how to fix the guys that might be in the way. This is big business," said Jim proudly. "Appleton expected to have two hundred thousand bucks to night."

Jim was a gambler. He shrugged his shoulders. He had lost before.

"Who killed Smucker?" Hanby demanded suddenly.

"Luigi. Served him right. He was trying to croak him, the dirty little rat! It was justifiable homicide, all right. Don't you waste no tears about Smucker. He come here to bump you off. I found him trying to set fire to the thicket, that night when we had that big gale, and the wind was blowing on to your house."

"Let's get this straight," said Hanby, when he had listened to other particulars. "You and Luigi were going to put these case goods in the stream, where they would float down to Boyle's place unseen. At Boyle's the same trucks that are working on the new road would be waiting. These would take the stuff and dispose of it. Is that right?"

"Positively, boss. Everything was fixed but your gang."

"Show me where it is hidden," Hanby said. "I wouldn't try to escape if I were you. Those boys will shoot."

At the edge of the large clearing, carefully stacked in piles, the searchers found thousands of cases of whisky, brandy, and old wines. Jim explained that there had been exhaustive experiments as to the length of time they would take to float downstream under the road and come to rest in Boyle's lake.

"It's a straightaway trip but for one place," Jim volunteered. "We found they jammed there sometimes, so we greased the boards, and now they ride pretty."

"What about the Seymour stuff under the lumber in the big cellar?" Hanby asked.

"That wasn't to go yet. I think Appleton was going to make a deal with you direct when the time came. He wouldn't have no difficulty in selling that. You can get any price for stuff that is absolutely old and genuine. There's lots of people afraid of getting wood-alcoholized yet."

Jim pointed to the cases all ready for the journey.

"This is all honest-to-goodness stuff," he went on, "but it ain't old, like it used to be, and it don't do a guy any good to lap it up when it's only two years old. I know. I've bin in the saloon business, Appleton trusted me because I'm off the stuff I keeps. Luigi, he drinks the cheapest sort of wine, like they used to make every morning in the red-link joints in the city. I'll say Appleton was a good picker. I don't yet get just how you busted in."

Hanby did not satisfy the fellow's zeal for knowledge. What followed puzzled Jim very much, but he made no remarks. He labored under the delusion that Leslie was anxious to shoot.

Nor did Luigi understand, but he, too, thought that his salvation lay in readiness to obey. Without pause he, Jim, Pelham, and Junior dumped the cases into the stream. Darkness was coming on when they finished. Jim had told them that by midnight the entire mass would be on Boyle's property, where Boyle and his sons would help to load them on the trucks.

"I can't keep the stuff," Hanby had explained to Burton, "and I want it seized on some one else's property. You can bet Appleton will keep his mouth closed!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What the Gray House Hid

*The Mystery of a
Haunted Mansion*

by Wyndham Martyn

W. N. U. Service
Copyright by Wyndham Martyn

CHAPTER X—Continued

—20—

"But these other two men?" Burton asked anxiously.

"They will find that they have an opportunity to get away. It's clouding over for rain. I'm willing to match my giant huckleberry hawk against your fighting fuchsia moth that we shall never see Jim or Luigi again!"

Jim and Luigi could hardly believe their eyes when they saw that the men with automatics had become neglectful. The two miscreants merged into the shadows, and faded from sight by some secret and unknown path.

There remained Appleton and his lady. Their problem was not so simple. Appleton must be held.

When the cell door was unlocked, the lady was voluble and angry. When Appleton's door was flung open, he lay on the floor.

"You've killed him!" she said, and flung herself at his side.

There was no doubt that she loved him. Presently he sat up and smiled at her. His face was white.

"My heart is not strong," he admitted. "Men with high color often owe it less to good health than to heart trouble. I have had much to worry me today. With your permission, I will get some medicine before we resume our conference."

Appleton seemed shrunken and feeble. It was the woman who supported him. Slowly they walked ahead of their captors toward the large living room. Appleton was courteous to the last.

"It is your house," he said, smiling feebly. "After you, gentlemen!"

Burton was the last to enter. When he was well in the room, the door was suddenly shut and locked behind him.

Five men stared at one another helplessly. The sick man had tricked them.

CHAPTER XI

It was ten minutes before they had smashed the door down. Outside there was nothing but darkness and pelting torrents of rain. With flashlights they searched the sanctuary until, about midnight, torn by thorn spikes and drenched to the skin, they had to confess that they were beaten. Appleton and his lady had escaped.

The five made their way to the wire edge of the bird sanctuary and came, exhausted, to the Gray house. Dina, Celia, and Florence Burton were waiting. Their alarm would have been greater had not Hanby left a note, saying that he and Bill and Junior were going on a long biking trip.

"Here," said Hanby dramatically breaking in on them, "are the lost ones! Florence, here is your Tom. Celia, behold the captor of the wild faun. I haven't a moment for explanations," he added. "Junior and I have to go out again." He turned to his son. "Get your car around to the front door as soon as you can."

Hurriedly he picked up the telephone and called the local chief of police, whom he had met in the Red Chapin murder affair.

"Mr. Hanby talking," he began. "I've just come in. I met a whole train of big trucks passing along south. I wouldn't be surprised if they were running a cargo of booze. I'd look into it, if I were you."

He hung up the instrument.

"I did that," he explained to his family, "because I want the seizure made somewhere not on my property. Boyle happens to be one of the tenants whose repairs Appleton has always supervised."

"What seizure?" Dina cried.

"Bill will have to tell you all about it."

Hanby picked up the telephone instrument that connected with the garage, the stables, and the gardeners' quarters. The listeners heard him give what seemed an extraordinary order. He instructed the three men in the stables to ride around the bird sanctuary until he ordered them to cease patrolling, and to hold any trespassers who tried to break away from it.

"Bill will explain," he said. "We'll be back in half an hour."

It was almost an hour before he came in.

"We've been checking up things," he said. "Now for something to eat!"

Again he took up the local telephone. This time he instructed a chauffeur to tell the men riding about the bird sanctuary that their task was done.

By this time Dina knew the whole story. She was particularly incensed at the part played by Appleton's companion, the lady with the pleasing voice.

"You don't mean to say those dreadful people have escaped?"

"Impossible!" Pelham cried. "How do you know?"

"Some three hours ago," Hanby told them, "Doctor Grant was coming from a case, and saw a plump gentleman and a good looking woman at our upper entrance gates. They were soaked through—from the rain, he supposed—and had a reasonable story to tell. Their motor had stalled somewhere, and they were on their way to get gas. Doctor Grant believed it, and took them as far as Stanfordville, where they bought a five gallon can and hired a car to take them back to their machine. The driver was told to go to the nearest railroad station. He did so, and received good pay and the can of gas. They took the ten thirty-five train to New York. I don't have to be a house detective or a Yale sophomore to guess who that drenched couple was."

"How did they get out of the sanctuary and make the upper road?"

"They went up the stream. We know there's a clear way, because Jim used to float the cases down. While we were losing our flesh and clothes in that d—d thicket, they were wading in three feet of water to safety. Another thing—while they delayed us, the crowd at Boyle's made its getaway. Such a night as this—foggy, rainy, and moonless—was a godsend to them. The tracks were plain enough in Boyle's yard when we got there, but the rain has washed all marks from the paved roads."

"Then it won't be easy to trace them?" the professor hazarded.

"It won't be hard to trace forty ten-ton trucks making a convoy for Manhattan. They can't make more than twenty-five miles an hour, at the outside. They'll get them, and they'll get Appleton, too."

Here the telephone rang sharply. It was the local chief of police. He was angry and disappointed. He informed Hanby that, with his own men and prohibition enforcement officials, he had overtaken, held up, and searched a fleet of big trucks proceeding southward. They were laden only with building material, which had been carefully examined. In every instance they were driven by men whose alibis were genuine.

"Wow!" said Hanby, hanging up. "That was a hot one! It certainly proves that the amateur detective business is not as simple as it seems. What Appleton or Jim did was to alter the destination of the booze ships. Instead of going toward Manhattan, they went into hiding."

Dina sensed deep depression in him. Her husband was a man who always played to win.

"Never mind!" she said, putting her arm about his shoulders, affectionately. "I'm proud of you all. You've given a husband back to Florence, and but for you I might have lost my son-in-law." She smiled at Leslie and Celia. "You've cleared up the great mystery!"

"Something is lost in every victory," Pelham reminded him.

Again the telephone disturbed them.

Hanby, answering, raised his right hand, enjoining silence and attention.

"Long distance," he whispered. "Listen, all of you!"

They crowded about the instrument. A distant central informed some one as yet unknown that here was his party.

"This is M. Hanby speaking," said the man at the instrument.

There floated out into the room the very clear articulation of Mr. Appleton.

"We wish to thank you," said Appleton, "for our opportunity to escape. Everything turned out as we desired. Jim reports the perfect success of his operations. Mrs. Appleton and I are now in New York. She was very much attracted by your personality. We both feel that we owe a great deal to you. Fortunately we can repay."

Hanby's face turned red. It infuriated him to have Appleton jeering at him over the long distance. He was commencing to tell Mr. Appleton what he thought of him when Dina tapped him on the arm.

"Listen!" she commanded.

"I am not lying when I say we can repay," Mr. Appleton remarked, when Hanby's recriminations were cut short. "Oh, dear me, no! As you will not see any of us again, I bequeath to you the contents of your own cellar. Even the law cannot take it away from you!"

[THE END]